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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

FROM THE J. M. S.

FRENCH OF FATHER MONSABRÉ, O.P.,

BY

VERY REV STEPHEN BYRNE, O.P.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE name of the world-renowned preacher, Father Monsabré, the author of the Meditations now presented to English readers, is a sufficient recommendation of their utility and intrinsic value. The devotion of the HOLY ROSARY has always been a favorite religious exercise among English-speaking Catholics, and it becomes more and more popular in these countries according as Providence has improved our condition and multiplied our numbers in the present century. Hence we offer these admirable Meditations on the mysteries of the Holy Rosary to our co-religionists of all classes with respectful confidence.

In order to clear away all doubts as to the person holding authority to establish canonically, in any mission or parish, the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, it may be well to remark that this jurisdiction is vested solely in the Master-General of the Dominican Order, or in his vicar when the general is absent from

Rome. This is manifest from a great number of Papal decrees issued on the subject during the last six hundred years. Special attention is called to two decrees of Pope Innocent XI., issued respectively on the 18th of April, 1678, and on the 31st of July, 1679. The same fact is elaborately and definitively explained in the Bull of Pope Benedict XIII. bearing date of the 20th of May, 1727.

Hence, that the confraternity may be canonically established, application must be made to the Master-General of the Dominicans in Rome; and this is usually done through the Provincials of the different nations in which the Order of St. Dominic exists. The explanation hereby given has for its object the securing to all devout clients of the Rosary whatever indulgences and spiritual benefits may have been, at any time, attached to this great devotion.

Father Monsabré has published seven series of "Meditations" on the Rosary, only three of which we give at present to English readers. The success of our first venture will insure the early publication of the remainder. The French work has gone through twelve editions.

We attach to our little volume the Encyclical of our present Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII.,

given on the 1st of September, 1883. This magnificent document relating to the Rosary, along with his other letters to the same effect, may be said to constitute a new epoch in the history of this devotion.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE ROSARY is a form of vocal prayer accompanied with a meditation upon one of the fifteen mysteries, distributed into three series—the Joyful, the Sorrowful, and the Glorious Mysteries.

The Joyful Mysteries are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

The Sorrowful Mysteries are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carriage of the Cross, the Crucifixion.

The Glorious Mysteries are the Resurrection of Our Lord, the Ascension, the Coming of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and Her Coronation.

The sacred art of the Rosary consists in reciting devoutly the prescribed prayers, whilst the soul, piously occupied in meditation on the mysteries, contemplates and draws fruit from the various circumstances in which our Blessed Saviour and His Most Holy Mother appear.

But how many complain that they cannot unite in one act mental and vocal prayer! This is indeed difficult if we are not penetrated with a knowledge of the mysteries and with their profound significance. To help the faithful to overcome this difficulty an excellent custom has long prevailed, and still continues, which is to make a short meditation before each decade. The recitation then becomes a solemn act of devotion, most attractive to pious souls, and most useful in exciting holy thoughts and religious sentiments whilst reciting the prayers laid down.

This is the object of the Meditations now offered to the public. It was expected that, after having edified the reunions held in our own conventual church, they might assist, to some extent, directors of the Rosary and its faithful children elsewhere.

We divide the work into seven series of meditations. In the first two series we will open the eyes of the soul to contemplate Jesus and Mary in the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious phases of their blessed lives. In the third series we will gather the fruit of each mystery. In the fourth series we will turn our attention to certain characteristic words of Holy Scripture bearing directly on the mysteries, and will

endeavor to fill our hearts with their divine virtue in our daily life. In the fifth series we will direct our intentions in our prayer according to the different subjects suggested to our thoughts in the life of Jesus and of His Most Holy Mother. In the sixth series we will connect the mysteries of the Rosary with the great mystery in which Jesus communicates Himself most intimately to our souls—the Holy Eucharist. In the seventh series we will apply ourselves to acts of love. The seven series will therefore appear as follows: 1st. Jesus in the Rosary; 2d. Mary in the Rosary; 3d. The Fruits of the Rosary; 4th. The Words of the Rosary; 5th. The Intentions of the Rosary; 6th. The Rosary and the Holy Eucharist; 7th. Acts of Love.

We do not pretend to exhaust the immense store of meditations and affections which the Rosary opens to our devotion, or to impose upon pious souls a sort of fixed directory in this regard. We aim at nothing but to offer our associates in this great devotion a spiritual indicator which they may consult in order to prepare themselves for more elaborate meditations than ours.

Deign, O Mary! our sweetest Mother, to bless our labors and to impart to Thy children Thy most precious gifts.

FIRST SERIES.

JESUS IN THE ROSARY.

Jesus in the Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries.

I.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—THE INCARNATE WORD.

GOD is about to descend from heaven and to clothe Himself with our poor and fragile human nature in the womb of a virgin; this is the mystery that the Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary (Luke i.) It is an incomprehensible and ineffable mystery, expected for four thousand years and prepared from all eternity. Let us contemplate this preparation even in the bosom of God Himself.

Before the birth of ages God saw all that was to be. The work conceived by Him unfolded itself before His eyes with all its wonders, with all its mighty revolutions. He saw sin enter into His work, and He decreed that sin should be punished. But the Word intervened and proposed to His Father to receive in His own adorable person the strokes of divine justice. Sin will be expiated by a Victim equal to the

Majesty it offends; it will be pardoned. To effect the reconciliation of mercy and justice, the Word, a member of the divine family, must become a member of the family of sinners and permeate with His infinite merits the guilty nature He would save. To this effect an unspotted and sanctified humanity, which God will wound and put to death on account of our iniquities, will be formed in the virginal womb of a daughter of Adam by the mysterious and chaste operation of the Holy Ghost. Such is the admirable and merciful design of the Holy Trinity. Let us adore it in the depths of our hearts.

The hour of its accomplishment has struck. Mary has pronounced the *fiat* (let it be done) of a new creation more glorious than that of the world; and "the Word was made flesh." The Word, the true Son of God, eternally begotten of Him, equal to His Father in all things, the resplendent mirror and living image of His original principle, the personal splendor of the divine substance—this is the Word made flesh. Flesh! did I say? Yes; He has passed by the angels and has not noticed their pure and holy natures, and He has espoused our soul with its weak and corruptible companion. He takes the world at its worst, in order to associate all creatures to His divinity; He descends to the lowest depths, for it is not the immortal and impassible flesh of innocence and justice He assumes, but the miserable flesh of sinners. If His sanctity shrinks from contracting the stain of sin, His merciful condescension assumes its entire responsibility. Thus, in the eyes of His

Father, He becomes sin itself: "Him, who knew no sin, He hath *made sin* for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). How well it is expressed by the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "He has annihilated Himself" (Philip. ii.)

In this annihilation all is pure goodness; we have done nothing to deserve it. The rare desires of holy souls were washed away in torrents of iniquity. After waiting long the world, in decay and in rottenness, appeared more deserving of destruction than at its beginning; but the errors and crimes of man had not exhausted the indefatigable love of Him who *annihilated Himself.*

In presence of this great mystery the sentiments of our soul should be those of profound astonishment, of loving and grateful admiration. The principle of our greatness is to be found in this abasement of the Divinity. Having adored the Son of God annihilated, let us consider what we are by the Incarnation: Brothers of God! Nothing is more certain than this great honor; for the Word incarnate, which Mary calls Jesus, is clothed in our veritable human nature and carries in His sacred veins blood drawn from the same source whence ours has descended. Whilst we give to Him, by the flesh, our earthly father, He gives to us, by the hypostatic union, His heavenly Father. Children of wrath, we are made in Him children of benediction; condemned to a double death, we receive from Him resurrection and life; proscribed by the malediction pronounced

in the beginning of the world, we are called by Him to the inheritance of glory and beatitude promised also at the moment of our creation. Our debased soul is raised to honor ; our flesh, humbled by suffering, aspires to immortality. With Jesus, and through Him, and in Him our thoughts, desires, and actions are purified, transformed, and raised to heaven. The aspiration of our nature, a prey, from the day of its origin, to the mysterious longing for the infinite, is at length satiated ; now we are indeed divine beings. Oh ! what honor, and, in consequence, what respect we owe ourselves ! "O man !" says St. Leo, "recognize your dignity ; and having become a participant in the divine nature by the incarnate Word, never lower yourself by returning to the meanness of your former life."

II.

THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—THE FIRST GIFT OF JESUS.

THERE is commotion in an humble home at Nazareth. They who live in it seem agitated, hurried; they are preparing for a journey. What is its purpose? Is Mary, till then so humble and discreet, now hastening to publish the wonders performed under Her roof and in Her womb? No; filled with the Holy Spirit, she carefully guards the secret of the King of Kings. But an interior voice says to Her: Go. It is Jesus who wishes to justify His name of Saviour without delay, to begin His mission of redemption, to destroy in souls the empire of sin, and to show Himself beneficent and merciful. One day the Apostle St. Peter will say of Him: "He went about doing good" (Acts x. 38). Even before He was born He merited this testimony. Hidden from human view, silent and imprisoned, He goes to manifest Himself and to give expression to His omnipotent goodness in visiting His Precursor.

Why does He not call the Precursor to Him? Is it not the duty of the servant to go to his master, of the sick man to seek his physician, of the poor man to go to the rich whose alms he begs? But love reverses all these rules; the King of Kings, the heavenly Physician,

the Author of grace anticipates the advances of His creatures. Not yet in condition to move of Himself, He wishes to be carried. "Behold," says St. Ambrose, "the inferior has need of succor, and his superior goes to his aid—Mary goes to Elizabeth, Christ to John. The wonderful meeting of the mothers is the signal for divine benefits. Elizabeth hears the voice of Mary; John is touched by the grace of his Redeemer." At the same instant the severe laws of nature, which confine the Infant in a mysterious repose, yield to the pressure of the Author of nature. "Before he was born John speaks by his motions of joy. Before entering into the world he announces his God; before seeing the light he points out the Eternal Sun. Still a prisoner in his mother's womb, he nevertheless performs the office of precursor, and says to all: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.'" These are the words of St. John Chrysostom.

Let us admire the full and sudden correspondence of the Precursor with the grace which purifies him from sin, illumines his soul, and calls him to the service of God. Let us consider the mystery of the Visitation as a type of the sweet anticipations of the divine bounty in our own regard, and of the line of conduct we should follow when we are visited by God's grace.

After the days, too quickly passed, which our Lord spent on earth, in which men could see and feel and touch Him, in which they could

contemplate His charms, hear His words, admire His works, condole with Him in His sufferings, and receive His promises, He is again hidden from human view in a manner even more profound than in His Mother's womb. Hidden indeed He is, but He has not withdrawn Himself to an inaccessible distance. "His delight is to be with the children of men." He is with us in our tabernacles, more imprisoned, more immovable than He was as an infant in the living sanctuary in which He first learned to live.

Thither He calls to Him His priests, and commands them to carry Him with reverential hands to visit our souls and fill them with His presence. What do I say? He stands night and day at the door of our hearts, knocking and demanding an entrance. "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (Apoc. iii.) Every grace that we receive, every advance He makes to us, every light, every good counsel, encouragement, or impulse towards good, is a visit of Jesus.

O dearly-beloved Saviour! How do we respond to so much honor and to so many benefits? Our souls, in order to become the abode of their Spouse in His sacramental visits, ought to deck themselves out in the most tender and perfect virtues. Like docile harps they ought to sing and thrill with joy at the touch of the Saviour's hand in the same manner as the unborn Precursor leaped for joy in His presence. But, alas! we meet Him more frequently with coldness, indifference, hesitation, and even a re-

fusal to accept His heavenly visits. Oh, how shameful!

Thou seest us, O Lord! penetrated with confusion and remorse at the thought of Thy many visits we have lost. Grant that they may not be lost again! Strengthen our faith, that we may be able at all times to adore Thy holy presence under the veil by which Thou concealest Thyself from our eyes. Make our souls delicately sensitive to the touch of Thy grace. Let every good impression received be at once transformed into a virtue. Let the prompt and abundant growth of Thy gifts draw from those who will see our spiritual transformation the words of the Psalmist: "Thou hast visited the earth and hast plentifully watered it; Thou hast many ways enriched it" (Psalm lxiv.)

III.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD—THE INFANT JESUS.

THE heavens resound with a joyous and sublime canticle: "Glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace on earth to men of good-will." Angels bear the glad tidings to the world: "This day is born to you a Saviour." O heavenly spirits! tell us where shall we find this Saviour so ardently desired, so long expected? In Bethlehem, the city of David. In Bethlehem! A small city indeed for so great a King! But surely some ancient, stately palace, the last relic of the fallen fortunes of those who once ruled in Juda, has been fitted up to receive the Son of God. Ah! no. His poverty finds no place for Him even in the public inns of the old city. The owners of human habitations refuse to receive Him; and His Mother, all desolate, sees Herself forced to share with animals a corner of their stable. "And this shall be a sign to you," continue the angels: "you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

What a change, great God, in Thy manifestations! Formerly, when Thou didst appear to our fathers of the old law, it was always under striking, and even terrible, figures; and often those who had been honored by Thy

manifestation were heard to cry out: "We have seen the Lord; let us die the death." Now Thou presentest Thyself to us in the form of an infant.

An infant attracts us by its charms and touches our hearts by its helplessness. Its weak cries, its sweet smile, its peaceful rest soften the heart. What is more amiable than an infant? And behold, my Saviour is one! He does not resemble the children of some royal house around whom servants and courtiers gather in crowds. A cradle gilt with gold, a sumptuous service, would repel the lowly and the poor; and Jesus came that all should approach Him with confidence and love. This is why He shows Himself to us "wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

But at this crib how many precious lessons unfold themselves to me!

The infant Jesus teaches me to trample under foot the vain honors which human pride pursues with frantic eagerness.

The infant Jesus teaches me to despise the false and fleeting goods which my covetous heart rushes after.

The infant Jesus teaches me that privations and sufferings are intended to tame and reduce to obedience my rebellious flesh, the enemy of all virtue and of my perfection.

The infant Jesus calls me to a state of simplicity and candor, to an obscure, solitary, and hidden life.

With deepest reverence I receive these lessons in my heart, for it is love that gives them to me.

Love ! Behold what moves me most to-day. The imperial edict which tore the Holy Family from the sweets of the domestic fireside, the blindness of men who refused an asylum to the Son of God hidden in the womb of His Mother, the cold December night of His nativity, the stable of Bethlehem, the swaddling clothes, the crib—all this was prepared in His eternal councils by the love of my God.

The Splendor of eternal light, the infant Jesus clothes Himself with our poor flesh. It is for love of me. My impure eyes could never have borne the brightness of His glory ; and yet I had need of coming near my God, of seeing Him, of hearing Him, of touching and embracing Him. After the anxious waiting of humanity we had need of being delighted in the light of His sensible presence.

Master of all the goods of the world, the infant Jesus condemns Himself to poverty. It is for love of me. My heart, so easily charmed with earthly things, had to learn that they are too small and too mean for my love, and that those who have the smallest portion of them ought to possess, like their Saviour, the fullest measure of spiritual goods.

Eternally and perfectly happy, the infant Jesus began to suffer at the moment of His birth into the world. It is for love of me. I will be less inclined to rebel against the hard necessity of suffering when I see my Saviour submit to it from the first moment of His mortal life.

Who will not return the love of Him who has loved so much ?

Would that I possessed the most pure heart of Thy Mother, O my Jesus, in which to love Thee as I ought!

Would that I could unite my affections with those of Thy adopted Father, so full of humility and reverence!

Would that I had a place among the shepherds whom the angels notified of Thy birth, so as to take part in their simple and fervent adoration!

Would that I could enter into the company of the kings and lay down at Thy feet the gold of my charity, the incense of my adoration, the myrrh of my penance!

O beloved Child! drive me not away. Allow me at least to envy the lot of the poor, dumb beasts that warmed Thee by their breath; and, even if it is small indeed, deign to unite the humble love of my poor heart with Thy infinite love.

IV.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN —THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS.

"AND presently the Lord, whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to the temple. Behold He cometh, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachy iii.) The holy souls did truly desire His coming. They anxiously waited for that event and seriously desired it. And they filled the ages with their plaintive invocations. In the mystery now under our consideration these true Israelites are represented by an old man, just and fearing God, who looked for the consolation of Israel, for the Holy Spirit had promised him in sleep that he would not die before he saw the "Christ of the Lord"; also by a venerable and holy widow who, although old, was less burdened with years than with austerities. Simeon, taking in his arms the Child of heavenly promise, chanted his canticle of eternal farewell to the world in the beautiful words recited every day in the offices of the Church: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, O Lord! for my eyes have seen Thy salvation" (St. Luke ii.) Anna, the prophetess, in an ecstasy of joy on seeing Him, whom she had invoked in her prayers day and night, "hastened to publish His glory everywhere and to

tell of His coming to those who looked for the redemption of Israel."

These just souls are holding high festival, yet nothing extraordinary is seen in the temple; to other eyes it is only a poor Infant that is brought to be presented to God according to the law of Moses. But this Infant accomplishes an admirable substitution that can only be comprehended by true Israelites. To all appearance He is redeemed before the law; but in reality He immolates Himself instead of the insufficient victims of the law. "Holocausts for sin were not pleasing in Thy sight; then said I: Behold I come."

Let us carefully consider this mystery. The labors, the fatigues, the sweat, the humiliations, the opprobrium, the sufferings and wounds, the blood and death of Jesus Christ are all laid at the feet of God in this presentation. All is offered and accepted; it is a sacrifice of propitiation and salvation. Mary takes part in this sacrifice. The sword of sorrow which will one day consummate Her anguish has a prototype in the sad prophecy addressed to Her to-day: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce." But will not all humanity, or at least the chosen people of God, profit by this offering of Jesus? Alas, no! The divine Child will meet with a thousand contradictions, and along with those who shall rise to glory by virtue of His sacrifice we shall see many, who shall despise it, eternally lost. "Behold this Child is set for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted."

Let us aspire to be of those included in the resurrection ; and, as Christ offers Himself for us, let us also offer ourselves through Him to His Father. It is only infinite perfection that can fill the void of our unworthiness and of our insufficiency. The victims of the old law, permeated with our intentions and our faults through the imposition of human and guilty hands, represented our guilty lives. Therefore God rejected them. He will reject us also if we dare present ourselves to him alone ; but in company with His well-beloved Son He can refuse us nothing.

Receive, then, O my God ! from our unworthy hands this unspotted Host that gives Himself to us ; this living religious worship which unites heaven with the earth in the union of the divine and human natures.

Thrice blessed Majesty of God ! I cannot offer anything proportionate to the greatness of Thy being out of my nothingness. The benedictions of all humanity, the universal canticle of praise taken up by all creatures, would be far too little for Thy glory ; but we adore Thee with Jesus, and through Him, and in Him.

Unbounded goodness of God ! neither our acts of thanksgiving nor the joyful transports of a world filled with Thy gifts can perfectly respond to Thy infinite benefits; but with whatever spiritual or temporal good there is in us we thank Thee with Jesus, through Jesus, and in Jesus.

Terrible justice of God ! Thou wilt not be

appeased by the sacrifice of our poor, sin-stained life. A hecatomb of all nature could not restore Thee the honor that sin has taken from Thee; but we implore pardon with Jesus, and through Him, and in Him.

Author of all good! Thou hast anticipated us in the effusion of Thy gifts. But how can we hope to secure a continuance of these, except with Jesus, and through Him, and in Him?

O heavenly Father! we present to Thee Thy only-begotten and well-beloved Son, the object of Thy eternal complacency. We hide ourselves in His heart; we present ourselves with Him in the arms of Mary to be immolated to Thy glory, if it is Thy good pleasure. Take all that we have—our mind, our heart, our body, our thoughts, affections, and desires, our life itself—and declare to us that our sacrifice is agreeable to Thee, so that we may joyfully sing with the holy old man, Simeon: "*Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine.*"

V.

THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE—JESUS MASTER.

THE law was fulfilled by the presentation in the temple. Jesus offered Himself to His divine Father in the name and in favor of humanity; and now He enters into the humble and obscure dwelling of Nazareth, where He increases in years and in strength, and is filled with wisdom, "for the grace of God is in Him."

Twelve years of silence and obscurity pass quickly by, after which we find Him, when it was supposed He was lost in the excitement of a great festival, among the doctors of the law, hearing them and asking them questions.

O marvel! These men, who have grown gray in study and in learning, who almost know the number of letters contained in the Sacred Writings, who scrutinize the mysteries and reduce to a nicety the interpretation of the law—these wise men of Israel, whose grave and learned word had the greatest weight in the land, have found their Master. They have found Him in a child of twelve years! Their humbled pride is astonished at the profundity of His teaching and at the wisdom of His answers. It was the first wound it received, and its sting will continue to rankle in their hearts

until the time of His public preaching shall have come. The people simply give way to ecstasies of admiration: "And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers" (Luke ii. 47).

Dear and admirable Child! I know who Thou art. Divine Word, infinite Wisdom, Thou art come from the "mouth of the most high God." In God Thou hadst subsisted before the birth of time, and in Him Thou wilt subsist when time shall be no more. Hear His inspired word in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs: "When He prepared the heavens I was present; when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths; when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits; when He balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him, forming all things, and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times: playing in the world; and my delights were to be with the children of men." Thou knowest, O Lord! all secrets, even the most profound secrets of the Divinity. What Thou hast revealed to men is no more than a drop from the ocean of Thy infinite knowledge. The Sacred Scriptures, full of Thee, have been written by Thy inspiration. Who, then, can so well explain them as Thyself? Therefore I am not astonished that questions and answers should fall from Thy lips which confounded the learned doctors of the law. I wonder not, but rather

cry out in my simple ignorance, with the prophet Isaias: "Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, for a leader and a master to the gentiles" (chap. lv. 4).

Speak, O Master! speak. It is Thy right and Thy function. Is it not right, and even necessary, that Thou shouldst be "engaged in the business of Thy Father," Who, by Thy teaching, hast deigned to instruct us in the mysteries of eternity?

Speak, O Jesus! to the great and powerful, too often surfeited with empty grandeur; speak to the worldly-wise of our day, whose proud reason too often vanishes in the delirium of folly; speak to the worldly-prudent, who, in their presumption, pretend to have no other rule of life than common honesty. Show them that nothing is truly great which does not lead up to a participation in the divine Sonship; that human science must submit itself to the science of heaven; that the wisdom of the world, from the moment it refuses to enter upon the heroic way of Christian virtue, is supremest folly.

Speak to the poor, the ignorant, the humble, to raise them from their abject state; teach them the mysteries which no human reason can fathom; and conduct them by humble and despised pathways to the dwelling-place of life eternal.

Speak to me, O my Jesus! I listen to Thee, and I wish to receive no other promises than Thine, no doctrine but Thine, no law but Thine. For me it is not necessary to behold

Thee with the eyes of the flesh to submit to Thy teaching. It is enough for me to read Thy books in which Thy words are engraven; to hear the Church, the guardian of Thy truth and of Thy commandments; to feel within me the mysterious attractions of Thy holy grace.

O adorable Jesus! speak to me especially by Thy grace. Speak to my spirit and to my heart. Let my thoughts, desires, affections, discourses, and acts be regulated by Thy internal word. Speak to me, as Thou didst in the temple, with the sweetness and amiability of a child; but if my obdurate heart refuses to be moved by Thy loving words, speak to me with authority and with the just severity of an offended Master. Press, insist, reproach, threaten, annoy, and torment me. I am prepared to submit to Thy rigors. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

The Dolorous Mysteries.

VI.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN—THE ANGUISH OF JESUS.

LET us humbly ask our Blessed Saviour to admit us among the chosen disciples who followed Him to Gethsemani. There, casting off sleep, let us enter into the grotto in which Jesus is prostrate, and contemplate His agony. What a sad and sorrowful spectacle! The human nature of our Saviour, till then calm and serene, is disturbed, saddened, and afraid at the approach of death; yet death is not for that nature a surprise. For a long time its cruel necessity, the hour in which it would take place, its many mournful circumstances were well known to Him. Then His humanity was not troubled; but now at the supreme moment the storm breaks more relentless and more dreadful than upon any other nature. Whence comes this awful change? From a secret weakness long held under the mask of a hypocritical peace? Blasphemy! Every circumstance in the agony of our dear Master is a prodigy. The exercise of His omnipotence was necessary to open the door of

His holy soul to grief at all; and, again, His omnipotence was needed to prevent His death in His unspeakable anguish. It was because He willed it that passions hitherto submissive were agitated and troubled. It was His divine foreknowledge that placed clearly before Him the living and frightful images of death and sin. He brought before Him in one appalling vision all the evils He was about to endure—the treason of His disciples, the abandonment of those whom He loved, the sacrilegious hatred of the Jewish priests, the injustice of the great, the ingratitude of the people, the despair of His friends, the tortures of His beloved Mother; the insults, injuries, humiliations; the spittle, the scourging, the crown of thorns; the cross and, at last, His death as the most infamous of malefactors. And all these evils for sinners who had loaded past ages with their iniquities! Sins of the mind, of the heart, of the senses; the abominations of idolatry, injustices, violences, debaucheries of pagan races; the prevarications and apostasies of His own people—Jesus saw it all. But the future weighed more heavily upon His dismayed soul than the past. His precious blood would be shed for millions to no purpose; they would ungratefully refuse His grace and would reject His merits.

"And He began to fear and to be sad" (Mark xiv.) Jesus is seized with a mysterious sadness. His sacrifice seems to be repugnant to Him, and He implores God to spare His life, threatened with so much ingratitude and

profanation. We read it in the twenty-ninth Psalm, in which David had already spoken in His name: "What profit is there in My blood whilst I go down to corruption?" Why shed it if, in a great measure, it is sure to be lost?

"Jesus begins to fear." His spirit and His flesh, so tenderly and so purely united, protest against the horrors of a cruel and unmerited separation.

"His soul is sorrowful, even unto death." He falls with His face to the ground; a sweat of blood flows upon it; He is in an agony. He would certainly have expired if He had not been sustained for the bitter death of the cross by divine power.

Oh, what a conflict! Human nature, left for a moment to itself, repels the too bitter chalice which God presents to it. "O my Father! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." But His human nature is promptly lifted up by the divine nature and abandons itself to the most holy will of its heavenly Father in the words: "Not My will but Thine be done."

O most sweet and blessed Jesus! I am not scandalized in Thy agony and dereliction; rather do I see, under the doleful veil of this mystery, Thy sacred divinity, and I offer to it the homage of my faith and adoration. Prostrate in spirit before Thee in the grotto of Gethsemani, I tenderly pity Thee in Thy awful sorrows, and I beg the grace to take part in them. Have I not merited these by my innumerable faults? Is it not to me that this disgust with a sinful life, this fear of the ter-

rors of divine justice, this sadness unto death, properly belong? Be just and severe, O my Jesus! Give me strength to suffer with Thee! How bitter soever Thy chalice may be, grant me grace to submit to it, and accept it as Thou didst accept the holy will of God.

VII.

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR—THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

IN the sixteenth chapter of the book of Job we find words which admirably prefigure the awful scourging of our Lord: "He hath gathered together his fury against me, and threatening he hath gnashed with his teeth upon me; my enemy hath beheld me with terrible eyes. They have opened their mouths upon me; and, reproaching, they have struck me on the cheek. They are filled with my pains."

Having fallen into the hands of His enemies, having been judged and condemned, Jesus is delivered up to a troop of malefactors, the vilest and most cruel of whom act the part of executioners in the pretorian court. They seize their victim violently and bind Him fast to a pillar at which He is to be scourged. They arm themselves with rods and thongs, and strike Him with all their strength without counting their blows. The sacred body of our Saviour shudders. In the midst of the hissing of the scourges His deep moans and sad, low cries are heard. The fierce butchers, already drunk with wine, are infuriated at the sight of His blood.

They yield to fatigue, but the awful work

is not yet finished. Still more! Still more! is the cry that is heard. Some bring knotty brambles bristling with thorns, others bring iron-mounted thongs. These frightful cruelties last nearly an hour, a part of the people gloating over their victim, a part of them buried in stupor. Not to have expired under this treatment required the strength of God. Jesus can no longer stand erect. His body is one red, gushing wound. His eyes, almost closed with tears and blood, see only His executioners; yet so sweet and mild are they that they would soften a savage beast. But under control of the passion of hatred man is more savage than any beast. So much love on the part of our dear Saviour only irritated His enemies all the more. At last, when He had received five thousand strokes, as it has been revealed to His Saints, Jesus is untied from the pillar and falls covered with blood.

What hast Thou done, O sweet Lamb! to bring upon Thyself this fearful barbarity? Thou hast selected these people from among the gentile nations; Thou hast delivered them from the slavery of Egypt. Through a thousand dangers Thou hast brought them into the land of benediction. To them and to us all Thou hast promised the blessed liberty of the children of God. Is it for this Thy beneficent hands are torn and bruised? Is it for this Thou art tied, like a rebellious slave or a vile malefactor, to a pillar?

Thou hast consoled the just and holy men of Israel, "the men of desires," who, inclining

their hearts and souls to the future, looked for the coming of God's envoy. Thou didst go about doing good, and Thou hast stretched out Thy loving hand to solace all human infirmities. Thou hast cured the paralytic and the lame ; Thou hast given hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, life to the dead. Is it for this Thy sacred body has been beaten until it became one bleeding wound ? Thou hast brought down manna from heaven like the dew of the morning, and from the hard rock Thou hast brought pure water to relieve Thy people about to die of thirst in the desert. Thou hast multiplied a few loaves in another desert to feed the famished multitude that followed Thee. Thou hast allowed a torrent of heavenly doctrine to flow from Thy lips. Thou hast opened for our souls fountains of living water, the divine virtue of which will make it leap to the abodes of eternal life. Is it for this Thy flesh was torn and Thy blood shed ?

O my dear Saviour ! Thou didst merit nothing but our tender respect and loving gratitude ; but I hear the prophet Isaias say (liii.) : "He was wounded for our iniquities ; He was bruised for our sins." And how truly has his word been realized in Thee !

Nothing could be more just than that our sinful flesh should be tied to a pillar and beaten to death ; but, even if our blood were drawn drop by drop until no more remained, of what value would it be as long as it was impure and sinful ? But there must needs be blood, for I hear the Apostle of the Gentiles say in his Epis-

tle to the Hebrews: "Almost all things, according to the law, are cleansed with blood; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (chap. ix.)

Adorable Jesus, Thou hast fulfilled this austere law, and the lashes of Thy executioners, more effectual and more salutary than the rod of Moses, have opened, even in our flesh, wounds through which our salvation enters.

Flow on, flow on, O adorable stream of my Saviour's blood! I cast myself into this sacred fountain. Penetrate me and wash me, not only from all impurity and weakness of the flesh, but from all weakness and languor of soul. Go to the root of my imperfections and spiritual miseries. Wash away and bear far from me sin and the principles of sin.

VIII.

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS—THE IGNOMINY OF JESUS.

"GO forth, daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart" (Cant. iii.)

This King Solomon means my Saviour. The Church, His spouse, invites us to go with her and contemplate the strange and unheard-of diadem with which the synagogue, His cruel and relentless step-mother, crowns our Holy Saviour.

Those who were employed to scourge Him are now glutted with blood; the soldiers lying listlessly around wish to amuse themselves. "Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus in the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band" (Matt. xxvii. 27). A broken column and a shaky stool is found. It will answer for a throne. Our dear Saviour is stripped of His garments a second time. An old scarlet mantle is thrown upon His shoulders; this is His royal purple. A reed is put into His right hand; this is His sceptre. Now, O my Saviour, be seated! Thou art about to be crowned!

The soldiers have obtained three thorny

branches, which, with diabolical art, they twist together in the form of a crown, bristling on the inside with a hundred sharp points. These ruffians, assuming a solemn air and simulating a grave ceremony, place this newly-invented crown on the head of Jesus. It will not keep its place at first, but they force it to remain by the blows of a piece of wood. The thorns pierce His head on all sides, and His eyes are almost destroyed. All the veins of the head are pierced; blood flows like water from this newly-opened source. Jesus now loses the power of sight; He is a prey to burning fever; He is devoured by extreme thirst, and He shudders with pain and anguish. Nothing can be conceived more frightful, but it is mere sport for His tormentors. One after another they come before Him, bending the knee in mockery, saluting Him with the words, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they throw down the throne and its Occupant, and again put Him on it with brutal violence. All this lasts at least half an hour, and is applauded by the full cohort which surrounds the pretorian. Then our dear Saviour is brought to Pilate, who presents Him to the people with the words: "Behold the Man!"

Yes, behold the Man! No longer the glorious being whom the Father presented to a world just fresh from His creating hand, saying to it: "Be ruled by Him, be His subject." Behold now the Man such as sin has made Him! The ignominy of our Lord is a living and a horrible image of the ignominy of the sinner. How

wretched indeed the sinner is! He thinks that it will increase his power, or at least his independence, to throw off the yoke of the divine will and to follow no longer any but his own. Soon he becomes a marvel of shame and misery.

Behold the Man! Jesus is despoiled of His clothing and covered with a ragged purple garment. The sinner is stripped of the white robe of innocence. Grace, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the reflection of the glory of God in his soul, all disappear at the very instant in which he becomes a sinner. Only the tattered remnants of a dishonored nature are left to him.

Behold the Man! Jesus is crowned with thorns, the sharp points of which pierce and torture His adorable head. The sinner is wild with joy in his transgression. His joy comes quickly and flies away again like the lightning. The enjoyment of past iniquity soon becomes nothing more than the sharp thorn of disgrace and remorse.

Behold the Man! Jesus is forced to take into His hand a reed for a sceptre; it is a mock sceptre, an insult to His omnipotence. The sinner holds over his passions only a power enfeebled by the consent he has given to sin. His reason, deprived of the supernatural vigor derived from grace, no longer knows how to rule the appetites. It is no longer the rigid sceptre to which obedience is given; it is now but a reed that bends with the least resistance.

Behold the Man! Jesus has His hands tied and is led without effort from Pilate to Herod,

and from Herod back again to Pilate. The sinner has forfeited his liberty, for "he that commits sin is become the slave of sin" (John viii. 34).

Behold the Man! Jesus is the sport of a troop of soldiers, who deride Him, buffet Him, treat Him as a fool, and mock Him in His miserable state. The sinner, when his eyes are opened, will see around him a troop of devils well pleased with their triumph, laughing at the misfortune of their victim and feasting on their victory with atrocious joy. For a long time they had looked for his fall, which they effected by their wiles. Their hour is come; they hold fast this proud soul that wished to be its own master. It is become in their hands a mock-king, whilst it listens only to their flatteries and is invisibly saturated with their outrages.

What ignominy! O my God! Behold what sin has made of man!

O humbled yet blessed Saviour! I bring to Thy feet this miserable soul, which at length confesses its disgrace. I bring it confused, repentant, wounded not merely by cruel remorse, but also by the salutary thorns of contrition. Have pity on it. Touch it with one drop of that precious blood which flowed from Thy adorable head. It comes to Thee to be transformed, to be invested with glory and honor; a master again, and possessed of the blessed liberty of the children of God. Seeing it, restored the angels will cry out in joy: "Behold the Man."

IX.

THE CARRIAGE OF THE CROSS—JESUS FALLS UNDER THE CROSS.

NOTHING in the Passion of our Saviour can possibly resemble ordinary sufferings; all His ignominies, all His dolors are outside of the common description of punishments or of executions. He was scourged as no one had ever before been scourged; no one before Him had been insultingly and barbarously crowned with thorns; and now He is brought to the place of His execution in a manner different from all others.

The custom of the age required slaves to carry the gibbet of a condemned person to the place prepared for it. But figures and prophecies had proclaimed in advance the additional and special tortures reserved for Him. Abraham had placed the wood of the sacrifice on the shoulders of his son Isaac; Jesus, the new Isaac, is made to bear His cross to the hill of sacrifice. The prophet Isaias had seen Him in this state of humiliation and suffering when he cried out: "The government is on His shoulder"—*Principatus super humerum ejus* (ix. 6).

Wherefore Jesus, having heard His sentence, is brought to the middle of the forum. His cross is there. He prostrates Himself to take

it upon Him; He embraces it as if it were a long-wished-for spouse. The trumpet is heard; the officers cry out: "Move on!" Jesus rises. On the right and on the left the people stare at Him.

With naked and bloody feet our dear Saviour, stooping low, tottering on His limbs, torn with wounds, exhausted by a long fast and by the loss of blood, advances, or rather creeps, to Calvary. Officers in front of Him are dragging Him along; others are pushing Him forward. He cannot make one firm step. Loaded as He is, and not being able to advance as they desire, those who follow Him ever press Him on, and thus he falls several times with His face to the ground, and the cross falls with Him. The executioners raise Him with imprecations and kick Him as they would the meanest animal. It is the most frightful spectacle to be imagined. O Christian soul! veil not your face; look on. Move forward along with Him. Follow your Saviour piously on the sorrowful way to Calvary. Content not yourself with weeping, like the holy women who will not leave Him; but gather up and carefully guard, in an humble and contrite heart, the deep lessons He gives you. The burden of the cross is, after all, less heavy to Him than the immense weight of our sins. It is really under this weight He falls to teach us what a heavy load to carry is a sinful life. If we do not take steps to throw it from our souls as soon as we feel its weight, it will drag us down and cast us into an abyss. Vain thoughts, frivolous desires, culpable levi-

ties appear to us as nothing; yet how often are they the cause of shameful falls! Jesus falls several times on His way to Calvary. Herein He gives, for our benefit, a sign of our sad weakness. This Man, weakened, bruised, pushed forward, thrown down by soldiers and spectators, is a symbol of ourselves. The infirmities of nature and the tribulations of life cast us down; the passions make us feel in our souls their terrible sting; the demon tempts and torments us; the world multiplies its seductions around us; yet we go on in our course without serious attention to the dangers that beset us, and without any safeguard, as if there was no danger to our virtue. Our Saviour says to us: "Take care, take care, for the strong have fallen!"

He fell in the dolorous way, but He quickly rose again, notwithstanding His bruises and wounds, to show us that we too, when thrown down by the enemy of our salvation, ought to rise quickly again. To make no effort to gain our feet, not to call any one to our assistance, to make known to no one our great misfortune, would be the part of sloth and pride. And then the evil one, whose hatred rejoices in our falls, endeavors to persuade us that it is better to wait. Of what use is it to rise? We are still so very weak we will fall again. Later in life, when age shall have fortified our reason, when the passions, growing cold, no longer make such pressing demands, when we shall have been satiated to disgust with pleasures the attraction to which has hastened

our fall, then it will be time to say, "Rise, go on!"

Oh! how foolish. Who has promised that death will not come and find us in our sin, or that the inveteracy of evil habits will leave us any power at all to repent? No, no! Away with cowardly sloth, away with presumptuous delays! Then all the rest will follow.

But can we repent now? Are not our repeated falls an evidence of ingratitude which has exhausted the divine mercy? Here is another temptation of the evil spirit against which the infinite goodness of our Saviour protests, as well as the "plentiful redemption" we will find in His blood. "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption" (Psalm cxxix.) He came to save sinners; He will not break the reed bent down by the tempest. He wishes to receive us to His mercy, and to pardon all our sins each time we go to Him with an honest and sincere heart. Up, then, poor sinner, up! It is Jesus invites you. It is possible you may fall again, notwithstanding all your good resolutions. But stay down not a moment; always beg the grace of God to give you true penance until the supreme moment comes when God's last pardon shall be the answer to your last act, an act of contrition.

X.

THE CRUCIFIXION—THE DEATH OF JESUS.

WEAKENED almost to death by wounds, exhausted by a most painful journey, crushed and bruised under the weight of His cross, Jesus reaches the summit of Calvary. Let us concentrate our thoughts upon this last and most awful scene of His Passion.

The executioners seize upon our dear Saviour and roughly drag off His garments, now adhering to the wounds made in His scourging. They stretch Him upon the cross and violently lay hold of His bruised and torn members, driving rough nails into His hands and feet. The breaking and disjointing of His bones is distinctly heard. Oh ! how horrible. Finally the cross is set upright and the Victim is exposed to the view of a degraded and immoral crowd, gathered from all parts to Jerusalem to feast on the spectacle of His agony and to insult Him in His expiring pains at a time when the suffering of the most infamous criminal would command pity and make of him an object sacred to respect and compassion.

But the sweet Lamb of God forgets all injuries and all cruelties. He pardons His murderers, promises paradise to the repentant thief, gives His Mother to us to be our Mother for evermore, thirsts for souls and invites them

to Him. He submits to the divine will, and fulfils the prophetic oracles until all is consummated. He lovingly complains that He is abandoned by the Father, commends His soul to Him, utters a loud cry, and expires.

Jesus is dead! But He has not yet poured out upon us all the treasures of His love. His Sacred Heart is pierced by a lance, which brings with it blood and water to give living virtue to the sacraments and to regenerate sinful souls.

Jesus is dead! Let us contemplate His body, all livid and covered with blood. To our carnal eyes it is without beauty or glory; but His Father joyfully turns to Him; He clasps the Victim of sin in a loving embrace, and gathers into His merciful bosom all the merits and sufferings of that divine Victim. He is the well-beloved of whom Solomon sang; He is the well-beloved, clothed in the white robe of innocence and in the purple of sacrifice: "My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands" (Cant. v. 10).

Jesus is dead! Let us unite ourselves with the invisible angels who surround the cross and adore in silence His lifeless flesh. The soul of which it was the unspotted tabernacle has left it to visit the sombre prison in which the just souls of the old law awaited His coming; but His divinity is still there, preparing in those dead members the triumph of the resurrection.

Jesus is dead! Let us weep with His Most Holy Mother, and beg of Her to obtain for us a portion, at least, of Her tender and profound

compassion. All the dolors of Her Son are felt in Her maternal Heart. Her tears are a reproach to our guilty hearts, yet She desires nothing so anxiously as our pardon. O Queen of Martyrs! O Mother of God and of men! we will cling for ever to the memory of Thy great mercy. That we may continually bring it to mind, imprint deeply in our souls the wounds of Thy crucified Love :

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

Jesus is dead! Let us lament with Magdalen, and with the centurion strike our breasts; our sins indeed have crucified our Saviour. Come forward now, all ye impieties, blasphemies, ingratitudes, sacrileges, proud thoughts, tumultuous ambitions, egotism, injustices, lies, deceit, pleasures of sense, shameful indulgences—come to the mangled body of your Saviour and be confounded. "Of a truth you have murdered the Author of life." O my Jesus! I am ashamed to appear before Thee; I fear the fate of Thy executioners; I would fly far away from Calvary, the scene of my infamy, if I were not kept there by Thy merciful words and by Thy promises of pardon.

Jesus is dead! Let us forget all else, and give our hearts without reserve to the contemplation of the holy Cross, as if we were alone in the

world with it. It is for us, for each one of us, He was crucified. For us, in this sense : that He is our substitute on that frightful gibbet on which, but for Him, we would have received the strokes of God's justice. For us, in the sense that He has expiated our faults and accomplished the work of our salvation. To Jesus crucified be ever given the homage, too long withheld, of our heartfelt repentance ! To Jesus crucified be ever given the homage of our deepest gratitude for the greatest of all benefits —that of our redemption !

The Glorious Mysteries.

XI.

THE RESURRECTION—THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS.

JESUS, having been taken from the cross, is placed in a new sepulchre in which His flesh, fearfully mangled by the ordeal through which it had passed, reposed for a little while. Its rest was not the deep sleep which weighs down human beings after they breathe their last sigh, and from which only the trumpet of the angel will awaken them; it is a tranquil slumber from which the voice of God will soon arouse Him.

Two passions—hatred and fear—watch round His tomb. It is covered with a huge stone and secured by the seal of the synagogue. The soldiers are on guard to prevent any secret approach. It is confidently believed that these precautions will stifle for ever in the tomb the voice of Him who had said of His body: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again" (John ii. 19). How ridiculous and foolish men make themselves when they attempt to run counter to the designs of God or to give the lie to His promises! On the morning of the third day there is an earthquake; an

angel descends and rolls away the stone; and the flesh of Jesus, receiving life again by the divine power, springs forth, glorious and immortal, from the arms of Death.

Let us adore our risen Saviour! No longer is He a prisoner whom the soldiers of the synagogue and the pretorium drag about from one tribunal to another; no longer is He the man forsaken by His Father and His friends, and complaining most touchingly of the rigors of divine justice; no more is He the condemned man whom all insult who dare address Him; no longer is he the man covered with wounds and become like a leper whose aspect is fearful to look upon; nor is He any more the dead body which His afflicted Mother enshrouded with reverent hands and saw laid in a sepulchre. Now He is free, joyous, triumphant, radiant, immortal. Let us, with the Psalmist, sing to the Lord: "Thou hast broken my bonds, and I will offer to Thee a sacrifice of praise." Thou hast not forgotten the Just One in His tomb, "nor hast Thou allowed Thy Holy One to see corruption." With St. Paul we will cry out: "O death! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv.) "Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall have no more dominion over Him; for in that He liveth, He liveth to God" (Rom. vi.) Let us sing these canticles of joy and then turn our thoughts upon ourselves.

This great mystery includes for us a lesson, a figure, and a promise.

The ineffable joy and glory of the Resurrec-

tion have been purchased at the price of most horrible sufferings. It was inevitable. It is our Saviour Himself who tells it to those who, like the disciples of Emmaus, might be scandalized or weakened on account of His Passion: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to have entered into His glory?" (Luke xxiv.) Now, the road of soldiers must be the same as that travelled by their leader. Enlisted under the banner of Jesus Christ, we cannot hope to attain the incorruptible glory and unalloyed happiness, promised by Almighty God, through the broad pathway of pleasure and enjoyment, which is unhappily too much frequented. Jesus did not take that road. It was the rough way of sorrow and pain, in which we can easily trace His bloody footsteps, that conducted Him to eternal honors. It was the cross He bore and on which He died that opened the gates of heaven, barred and bolted against the luxury of worldlings. The motto of every Christian ought to be: "Let me suffer, O Lord! in this life, that I may live eternally in the next."

This is the lesson of the Resurrection.

There is in it also a symbol or figure. The mystery of the Resurrection is a lively figure of the spiritual transformation which ought to take place in each of us. Sin is death. It is the tomb in which the captive soul sleeps a fatal sleep. The enemy takes all manner of precautions to prevent its awakening. Yet he cannot prevent the voice of God from reaching even this sepulchre of the sinful soul. "Arise,"

says that voice, "thou who sleepest; arise from the dead. Christ will enlighten thee" (Ephes. v.) At the first sound of that voice let us rise from sin. We may never hear it more. Death long continued will breed corruption.

But how will I rise? How break the cords that tie me down? How roll away the heavy stone that is laid over me? How break the inveterate habits and the shameful laxity of the will, which is weakened so much by its many consents to sin? Courage, Christian! In the figure just given there is a promise. For us Christ died, and "for our justification He rose again." The divine virtue of His glorified humanity will one day bring together the scattered dust of our bodies, and will make our flesh, dissolved in death, live again eternally incorrupt; but at present He addresses Himself to the soul especially to draw it from sin to justice, and to give it strength to "walk in the pathway of a blessed newness of life."

I count on Thee, O my adorable Master! Have pity on me! I am dead, or at least I feel myself dying day by day; for it is not life that languishes in tepidity. In virtue of Thy blessed Resurrection enable me to rise from the tomb of my failings. Create, O Lord! a new spirit within me, so that, penetrated with Thy light, disengaged from the influences of the flesh, active and alert in good works, and bent upon the perfection of my life, I may live henceforth only for Thee, as Thou livest only for God.

XII.

THE ASCENSION—JESUS IN HEAVEN.

LET us go to Mount Olivet. Thither Jesus brings His disciples for the last time. He recalls to their minds their divine mission, confirms the powers conferred upon them, again promises the Holy Spirit, gives them His blessing, bids them adieu, and rises towards heaven. The hearts of the apostles, divided between grief and wonder, follow with their eyes their adorable Master, who is leaving them, and whom they will never see again on earth. A bright cloud intercepts their view of the triumphant humanity of their Saviour, but they continue to look towards the heavens whither He had ascended. Now they understand all; and their hearts, so recently gross and carnal, break all earthly chains.

Let us with them raise our hearts to heaven. *Sursum corda!* If Jesus leaves us He does not forget us, nor does He abandon us to our exile without hope. His going is not to put an immense distance between His glory and our misery; it is to prepare a place for us: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). This is His promise; can we suppose He will not keep it?

O Jesus, our only love! we have need of hearing this good word fall from Thy adorable lips to console us in Thy absence. Thou goest to

prepare a place for us; is this world, therefore, not our most suitable home? Ah! no. It is too full of troubles to give that joy to the heart to which it aspires; it is too narrow to satiate the immensity of our desires; it is too uncertain to give us any assurance of eternal possession, the idea of which is inseparable from all our dreams of happiness. The eternal life of God, His infinite perfections, the perfect love of God, the boundless space which His immensity fills—this is the "length and breadth and depth" of which St. Paul speaks; this is the place to which we should direct our course and in which we should anchor our bark of life, the place which Jesus went to prepare for us.

He is there indeed. It is our humanity that triumphs in his person and sits at the right hand of God. Even if we were not called to a participation in His glory and beatitude we ought to be anxious to know where it is and to register His victory in our human records. If he belongs to God He belongs to us also; if He is of the divine substance He is also of our flesh and blood, and we may well declare with a holy doctor: "Where a part of me reigns, I believe I reign also; where my flesh is glorified, I am glorified; where my blood is king, I too am king."

But listen, Christian! Jesus does not wish to reduce you to the sterile honor of knowing His triumph. By His ascension He enters into the bosom of God the Father, not as a delegate, but as a precursor of humanity. This is the expression of St. Paul in his sixth chapter to the Hebrews. The precursor prepares the way

for those who follow Him, and the place in which they are to rest after the fatigue of the journey. The precursor puts all things in order; He waits for His friends and calls them in. But how much more certain and efficacious His office is when, instead of being a servant merely, He is master of those for whom He prepares a place, and master of the place as well!

Christ, our precursor, is all this. Let us consider carefully the words of the apostle. He teaches us that Christ asserted our rights by His very presence in the bosom of God. For we are His property, and He has a right to enter into heaven with what belongs to Him. "He is our head; we are the body and members of that head." But where the head is, there likewise ought to be the body and the members. But Jesus would be our precursor only half-way if, by His action, He did not put us in condition to realize our rights—that is to say, if He did not prepare God to receive us and did not prepare us to take possession of God.

He is our priest "for ever"; or, in other words, He presents eternally to God the most sacred gifts that humanity has to offer, and to humanity the most sacred gifts of God. Our acts of religion would never have penetrated this sanctuary, in which they ought to mark out a place for us, if they did not pass through the hands of Jesus Christ. And if we return to God after our transgression, our repentance is only acceptable because "we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Just." If the groans of our misery or the expressions

of our love are heard in heaven it is because Jesus appropriates them; for "He lives only to intercede for us." He shows to the Father the marks of His glorious wounds, and makes His blood plead more strongly than that of Abel.

O God! Thou canst not resist this strong cry. It must be that Thou permittest us to mark our places in the sacred tabernacles which Thou fillest with Thy blessedness. This is the will of my Lord Jesus; and in preparing Thee to receive us He prepares us to take possession of Thee. The incarnate Word, humbled and annihilated in the days of His life on earth, became on the day of His ascension the inexhaustible treasury of the gifts of God. "Christ, ascending on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men" (Ephes. iv. 8). Thus it is that the remedies of our faults, the succor of our weakness, the light of our darkness, the solace of our pains, the impulses towards good, all descend into our souls to make them worthy of God, whom we ought to possess. He extends His benign influence even to our corruptible flesh, which He prepares for the resurrection.

O Christian! meditate upon this glorious and consoling mystery. Never more turn to creatures as the end of your life. This world is not your resting-place. Honors, riches, pleasures, human affections are unworthy of a great and generous soul. Look to your Leader and Precursor; have confidence in His divine ministry; abandon yourself to His holy grace; raise your heart to heaven. *Sursum corda!*

XIII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST—THE SPIRIT OF JESUS.

THE apostles were assembled together in one place, awaiting in recollection and prayer the effect of the promises of Jesus. For He had said: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself; that where I am you also may be. . . . And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete [comforter or advocate], that He may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you and be with you" (John xiv. 3, 16, 17). Ten days after the Ascension of our Lord a mighty event took place. It was the fulfilment of the promise, and is thus recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon each one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii.)

O wonderful prodigy! But a moment ago

these men were ignorant and could not clearly understand the doctrine of their Master; now they possess a full knowledge of the most sublime truths. At one moment they express themselves in a weak and stammering manner; the next they are filled with a marvellous eloquence. At one moment they are weak and timid even to the extent of cowardice—they hide themselves, so as not to be involved in the misfortunes of their Master; the next they come forth boldly, and fearlessly proclaim their faith and love, and this, too, before a people who load them with injuries and drag them before their tribunals. They seem at one moment ungrateful and almost without hope; the next they are devoted to the words of their Master, even unto death. Now they are sad and downcast; all at once their hearts abound in hope and joy. What has happened? The Holy Ghost, having descended from heaven, has brought to perfection in the souls of the disciples the spirit and form of the Christian life, which until now were only in a crude, inchoative state. This is His special mission. The holy Fathers have sometimes called Him the "perfective force."

Learn from this, O Christian soul! that the effusion of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for thy salvation as is the application of the blood and merits of Jesus Christ.

"The end of man, which is to see God and possess Him eternally, is beyond the powers of nature," says St. Thomas of Aquin; "our reason cannot conduct us to it, if its natural movement does not bring to its aid the instinct

and motion of the Spirit of God." It is so necessary for us that without it we possess only the rudiments of the Christian and supernatural life.

Jesus, the divine Architect, makes of our souls His temples, having purified them with His precious blood. It is the Holy Ghost who consecrates us in marking us with His character, and conferring upon us the unction of His love and the illumination of His gifts. Pentecost is therefore, in the Church, a universal and perpetual festival. Our baptism is a pentecost; our confirmation is a pentecost. Besides this, as St. Thomas teaches, the divine Paraclete returns constantly in His secret visits, to illuminate, strengthen, and beautify with His gifts the souls of the just.

But let us hear attentively the word of God: "The Lord does not come in times of disturbance" (3 Kings xix.) We must have peace in our souls; we must remove the agitation of vain thoughts and of vain desires, if we would receive the Spirit of God. Let us await His coming, like the apostles, in recollection and prayer.

It is not likely that God will surprise us by sudden visits of His light and grace; in the ordinary workings of His providence He only sends His Holy Spirit to us when we say with earnest fervor: Come! *Veni Sancte Spiritus!*

Let us invoke Him, then, in the dark night of temptation, in the agony of doubt. When, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and drawn on by the glare of creatures, our uncertain spirit asks for the truth to guide it; and

when, desirous of the knowledge and light of faith, we desire to penetrate the divine mysteries, let us invoke the Holy Spirit, for he is indeed the "Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge."

When we are moved to determine and fix our vocation in life, when we are about to perform some work in which our consciences are deeply concerned, or if it is our duty to direct souls in the ways of God, let us invoke the "Spirit of counsel."

When we feel the love of God languish in our hearts, or even when we are moved by a holy zeal and we wish to love God with good effect, let us invoke the Holy Spirit, for He is truly the "Spirit of piety."

When the power of evil attacks us and the world persecutes us, when passion torments us, and when sorrow oppresses us, let us earnestly call Him to our assistance, for He is the "Spirit of fortitude."

When the abyss of sin is open before us and ready to engulf us, let us invoke Him with all our strength, for He is the "Spirit of the fear of the Lord."

In all our sufferings let us invoke Him, for He is indeed the Paraclete—the Comforter.

Against the slavery of all evil habits that weigh down the will let us invoke Him, for "where the Spirit of God is, there is true liberty."

Has He come? Then let us meet Him with attention, vigilance, and profound respect. Let us not "grieve the Spirit of God by our faults and imperfections."

XIV.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—JESUS AT THE TOMB OF HIS MOTHER.

MARY languished waiting anxiously many years for the blessed day that would reunite Her with Her Son. It came at length. Her lamp of life was peacefully extinguished in the home of the beloved disciple, St. John, surrounded by other apostles, whose messages she bore to heaven. A virgin sepulchre received the mortal remains of the spotless Virgin. It was the mysterious cradle soon to be visited by the Author of life. Sleep on, dear Blessed Mother, sleep on, whilst the infant Church mourns around thy grave!

Soon one of the disciples desired to see again His Mother's face, and to kiss the blessed hand that had caressed the Saviour of the world. The tomb was opened, but the immaculate body was not there; instead of it were found roses and lilies of the sweetest perfume—a fitting symbol of her perfections and virtues.

Thus a miracle is performed in the silent shade of the tomb. Jesus, from the highest heavens contemplating the spotless body which was the tabernacle of His humanity, repeated the words of the prophet: "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption." He applies it to His holy Mother; He will not suffer Her

to feel the corruption of the grave. Mary slumbers in death, as Her Son once did, but He awakes Her with these loving words of the Canticles: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. The winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle is heard. The fig-tree has put forth her green figs; the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come. . . . Come from Libanus, where the incorruptible cedars grow. Come and be crowned." *

Mary can neither rise nor ascend to heaven of Her own power, but the Author of life extends to Her His omnipotent force, places His angels at Her service, and they bear Her to Her home in heaven.

To us poor mortals the privilege of incorruption in the tomb does not belong. Wretched children of Adam, defiled, from the first moment of our existence, by original sin, unfaithful to the grace of our regeneration, frequently guilty of sin after having been pardoned, we have opened to death all the avenues of life. Death entered with sin and has written on our flesh this terrible word: Corruption! Nothing escapes its cruel tooth. The skin, gradually eaten away, soon disappears entirely, leaving only a dry skeleton; and this, too, silently crumbling into dust, is mingled with the surrounding earth by the grave-digger's spade

* Antiphon of the Assumption.

when he is preparing a place for other dead bodies. This is the end of all.

Let us not be terrified, however, at our nothingness. Men may seek for us in vain; but the all-seeing eye of God follows through the mazes of nature the wanderings of the particles which once composed our bodies. When the world shall have finished its course the Author of life will visit the empire of death, and with His sovereign voice will address the elements of which human bodies were once constituted, saying: "Unite, arise, come." Then the bones of each human being shall be recomposed, and the flesh shall recover the texture and color by which it was once before known. This is a certain truth.

And it is no less certain that our resurrection will be the same as our death. It will be glorious or ignominious, it will be for eternal joy or eternal sorrow, according as our death shall have been in justice or sin.

Let us meditate seriously on these truths; and whilst we carry about with us our bodies as vessels made by the divine hand for honor, and destined to receive from the same hand a new existence which no inimical force can destroy, let us take good care not to make of them objects of almost idolatrous attention which cannot save them from the ravages of time or the corruption of the grave.

If to-day we hear the forebodings of death, if we are saddened by our infirmities, if our thoughts are gloomy and dark, if the perfection of our souls is retarded or burdened with

the weight of our bodies, let us not repine. Patience! Patience! One day this poor companion of the soul will rise immortal, incorruptible, brighter than the stars of heaven, obedient to the commands of the soul which will impart to it a wonderful agility. If the body presses us with gross demands, and even incites to sin, we must inexorably repress it. We must preserve ourselves from all defilement by wise precautions, strong resolutions, and salutary chastisements. The more we resemble in the flesh the unsullied flesh of our Holy Mother, the more resplendent will be the glory of our resurrection.

XV.

THE CORONATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—JESUS THE REMUNERATOR.

HEAVEN is opened. Our Most Holy Mother, invited by Her Son, triumphantly enters in. "Come and be crowned," our Saviour says to Her. Let us assist in spirit at this coronation. It is the eternal consecration of all the virtues, of all the dolors of Mary. It is the recompense which confers upon Her the greatest power ever before imparted to a creature. All the kings of Judah gather round their well-beloved daughter. "David dances for joy; the angels and archangels unite with Israel's sweet singer to chant the praises of their Queen. The virtues proclaim Her glory; the principalities, powers, and dominations exult with joy; the thrones felicitate Her who was the living and immaculate throne of the Most High. The cherubim salute Her in a canticle of praise, and the seraphim declare Her glory," says St. John Damascene. Finally Jesus comes, and, amid the plaudits of the whole Court of Heaven, places a crown on the brow of His Most Blessed Mother.

Jesus forgets nothing. All is crowned in Mary: Her thoughts, Her desires, Her actions, Her virtues, Her merits—even Her privileges, of which She had rendered Herself most worthy

by Her constant correspondence with the admirable designs of God. The feast of the Coronation is a feast of justice.

Christian soul, this feast of justice ought to rejoice your heart! It is your Mother is honored, it is your Mother's triumph; and Her triumph teaches us that we have a just God in heaven, who, when the day of remuneration comes, will remember all. Therefore what signify the difficulties, sorrows, languors, and tribulations of our short lives? "For the rest there is laid up for us a crown of justice which the Lord, the just judge, will bestow upon us in that day" (2 Tim. iv.)

O senseless souls who run after earthly goods, can you say this of the world you seem to adore or of the rulers of the world? They promise riches, pleasures, celebrity, love. Your whole soul is held in a state of tension by the toys of imagination, covetous desires, or other passions; your senses themselves are disturbed, your health is injured, your life is filled with intrigues, troubles, and meannesses. Humble yourselves, throw away earthly cares, else you will never be able to say, with the noble and fervent confidence of the true Christian: "There is laid up for me a crown." Crowns of gold or of roses, of honor or affection, often slip from your grasp just when you think you hold them most securely. And if you were able to obtain at once all the crowns of the world, you must bring them at last before the "just Judge," who will, with pitiless hand, tear them from your brow and throw them down to rot where

you received them. We cannot carry with us to heaven useless or hurtful ornaments. Our crown in heaven—our true crown—will remain eternally on our brow and will never fade. "And when the Prince of pastors shall appear you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" (1 Peter v. 4).

Feed yourself, then, O my soul! on these deep and consoling thoughts. The all-just Rewarder of all faithful souls sees you and knows you. Despise the vain objects of worldlings and cling to the road that brings you to a crown of glory. It is a rough and difficult road. You will have to overcome obstacles, to leap over more than one abyss, to avoid ambuscades, to fight the enemy, to repair reverses and even defeats. Courage! Courage! All your marches, all your efforts, all your labors and combats are in God's keeping: "For the rest there is laid up for you a crown." You will say: "If I could only march alone on the hard road leading to glory! But no; I must carry along with me this miserable body. It is a furnace of sin, and of sorrow too. It obscures my sight so that I cannot see clearly what I ought to see; from it come doubts, scruples, dryness, disquietude, chagrin, and anguish. From time and from nature it receives many blows and wounds. How many are the evils, both external and internal, of our sad lives!" Courage! Courage! All these are counted; all will be crowned. At once a champion, a pilgrim, and a martyr, you will be able to say with the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "I have fought the good fight, I

have finished my course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also who love His coming" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

SECOND SERIES.

MARY IN THE ROSARY.

Mary in the Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries.

I.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN —GREATNESS AND HUMILITY OF MARY.

WE have followed our Blessed Saviour by contemplation through the mysteries of the Rosary. Our first duty was to Him. Under the invocation of His grace and permission we will now consider His holy Mother in these same mysteries. In doing so we will not lose sight of Him; for where Jesus is, there is Mary.

"An angel is sent from God to Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house and family of David; and the name of the virgin was Mary" (St. Luke i.)

Let us consider with what respectful homage the messenger of God performs his mission. He does not deliver a command, as the angels had hitherto done when addressing patriarchs, prophets, or kings; but he expresses by a re-

spectful salutation his profound reverence: AVE MARIA—HAIL MARY!

And what is found so venerable in this young maiden, this child of humanity, that an angel is obliged to bow before Her? Two things: The grace of God with which She is filled and the greatness to which She is destined. She differed in this from all other mortals, that She was not stained by the guilt of the primal fall. The sacred germ of sanctity engrafted upon Her from the first moment of Her conception had developed without hindrance or delay, and had produced virtues singularly admirable. She is indeed "full of grace, and the Lord is with Her." He will verily be with Her when the adorable mystery shall have been accomplished which Gabriel came to announce to Her in the very words of the prophet Isaias as quoted by St. Luke: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son, . . . and He shall be called the Son of the Most High."

What is the attitude of Mary in presence of this wonderful announcement? When God loaded Her with so many favors it would seem that Her first impulse would be a transport of joy and of gratitude. Not at all. Her joy is hidden; Her gratitude will come in its own time, more profound and more lively because it will have been prepared by a sincere and profound humility. Before the song of gladness passes through Her heart, and the expression of gratitude flows from Her lips, Mary instinctively imitates the annihilation of Him who comes to Her. She is troubled; She believes Herself un-

worthy of this honor conferred upon Her and of the glory that is announced. She reflects that it is only the One who is the source of all grace that can be truly full of grace. Having become certain that She was to be the Mother of God, She proclaims Herself His handmaid, and wishes ever to remain so.

How well calculated this wonderful humility of our Mother is to confound us! Wretched children of sin that we are and sinners ourselves, very poor in grace and virtue, we are ever ready to be puffed up with pride. There is no need of angels coming down from heaven to do us homage or to felicitate us, to make us think highly of ourselves. It is quite sufficient that men should address us in words of praise. And what men! Not always those who are superior to ourselves in position or character, not always those whose discrimination and ability justify us in giving credit to their words; but often the most inconsiderate and even vilest of men, men who content themselves with seeing merely the outside of our characters and who flatter us only to detect our follies and strip us of our good qualities. In the absence of flattery how prodigal we are of *Aves* directed to ourselves! Blind to our imperfections and faults, and considering only the advantages, more or less notable, we have derived from nature and education, we take occasion from them to prefer ourselves to others. The very gifts of God himself serve but to turn our heads; spiritual favors too often become food for our incurable vanity; and instead of seeing in them the pure

liberality of the Giver of all good gifts and of making them redound to His glory, we attribute them to our own merits and turn them to our own advantage.

O Mary ! Thou Virgin ever most humble, have pity on these poor children. Inspire them with a contempt of praise and flattery, a horror of vain complaisance ; and should they be gifted with the best that nature and grace can give, make them look upon themselves as the least of the servants of God.

II.

THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—THE CHARITY AND GRATITUDE OF MARY.

LET us admire the loving anxiety of Mary to be with Her cousin St. Elizabeth. She rises and goes with haste across the mountain country. She fears no difficulties of the road; She despises the fatigue of travelling, for She carries with Her the grace of God, and that grace is so great a gift we should be prepared to make any sacrifices in bearing it to those for whom it is destined.

And She goes, without knowing it, to receive a new honor. As soon as Elizabeth had heard the voice of Her salutation and felt the unborn child leap for joy in her womb, she took up and continued the words of the angel, saying: "Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb. And whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should deign to visit me?"

In response to these wonderful and inspired words there is another outburst of humility on the part of Mary; it is the grand canticle of thanksgiving which the Church repeats every day in her offices: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." The Mother of God hides Herself before Him and takes the humble position of a

servant. She speaks only of the glory of Her Lord, of His goodness, His munificence, His power, His mercy, His fidelity to His promises. She praises, blesses, and thanks Him; Her heart is full of the most perfect acts of thanksgiving.

Attention, Christians! This mystery contains for us two lessons. It teaches, first of all, that our relations with our neighbor should be regulated by a charity altogether supernatural—a charity having for its object the greatest of all benefits, which is the effusion of the grace of God in their souls. And, if we rightly understand our charity in their regard, those souls in which sin has made its dwelling-place will be most dear to us. We will freely sacrifice our pleasure, our repose, if needs be our health and life, to deliver them from the frightful evil that makes them enemies of God.

In the second place, this mystery teaches us that we ought to thank God for His benefits. All that is in us is God's benefit—our body, our soul, our life, every moment of our existence. To the benefits of nature those of grace are added—faith, the divine promises, the numerous donations God makes of Himself, interior lights, holy inspirations, mysterious impulses which inspire us with generous resolves. For how many and how great favors are we indebted to the divine bounty!

It is necessary to give thanks to the Author of all these blessings; it is the law. We bear that law within us; it is stamped upon our instincts and our conscience. To receive a benefit, to make it one's own, to profit by it, and to

forget the benefactor, is more loathsome to us than a thousand other meannesses, villanies, crimes, or misdeeds. The horror in which we hold the monster who has deserved to be called an ingrate can only be explained by a law of nature which requires every benefit to be returned to the benefactor in the form of grateful thanks. God's will is clear in this regard: "Give thanks to God in all things," says the apostle; "for this is the will of God in Christ" (1 Thess. v. 18).

Again, it is our interest thus to thank our benefactor; for if it is the law that the benefit should return to its author, it is also a law that the benefactor show himself so much the more generous according as he is more frequently and more sincerely thanked. Gratitude is the fruitful seed of benefits; ingratitude causes them to wither and die. It is, says St. Bernard, a scorching wind that dries up the dews of mercy and shuts off the torrents of grace.

Are we faithful in giving thanks? Alas! we are not. Energetic in asking, we open wide all the doors of our indigence to receive the gifts of God. When we have received a benefit we seem to think that it is no more than a just price for the pains we have taken to obtain it; and if our satisfied hearts are not entirely silent, they send forth to God, as a general rule, only a weak and cold expression of thanks. We are ungrateful. And this it is that brings about those spiritual aridities and days of desolation which we so bitterly complain of to the directors of our souls.

Do you desire, O Christian soul! that God would always add benefit to benefit in your regard? Then strive to imitate the gratitude of Mary, and let Her beautiful canticles, in some form, be on your lips: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, because He has deigned to have pity on the lowliness of his poor servant. I was not, and He gave me being; I was in darkness, and He gave me the light of faith; I was a slave of sin, and He broke my chains and crushed my proud enemies; I was in exile, and He made Himself my companion; I was feeble, and He sustained me by His powerful arm; I was hungry, and He nourished me by the Bread of heaven. Indeed the Lord has done great things for me."

Let us thank Him for evermore.

III.

BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR—MARY AT THE CRIB.

JESUS is born in Bethlehem ; He is born in a stable. In that most despised situation He received the homage of angels and of men—of angels, a joyful multitude of whom praise the Lord and make the air resound with the sublime canticle : "Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will"; of men also, of all conditions, who came to prostrate themselves before the crib and are in a manner repelled by the mystery of the abasement, the poverty, the suffering under which the majesty of the divine Word enfolds itself.

Here are the shepherds, men of simple, sweet, and faithful hearts ; there are the Magi, kings of knowledge and shepherds of men, having come from a far-distant country under the direction of a mysterious star ; and here is the humble Joseph, absorbed in the perfections of his adopted Child. They wonder, they adore and reciprocate their impressions of heavenly joy. For them Bethlehem is a paradise on earth.

More fervent than angels or men we behold an adorer at the crib of the Infant God ; it is His Mother. Every hour, every instant is spent by Her in adoring and loving the fruit of Her

chaste womb. Her love is intense, compassionate, attentive, devoted.

It is intense: She forgets the whole world; in it there is nothing for Her but Her Jesus. Her heart unites itself with His Heart, in order that She may never love any creature except in and through the adorable Heart of Her Saviour.

Her love is compassionate. The first sufferings of the Man-God rebound most sadly upon Her maternal heart, all the more sensitive than the hearts of other mothers because She is a virgin. It is most grievous to Her to be able to offer for His comfort only poor swaddling-clothes. She tenderly wipes away the tears of the divine Infant; She is ready to suffer all evils for His sake.

Her love is attentive: She seeks to find in the eyes of her Child, in His smiles, in His cries, in the movement of His lips, the expression of His most holy Will. But more than all else She studies within Herself the mysterious workings of grace, and holds Herself in readiness to obey every impulse of divine love.

Her love is devoted: She gives all to Him. Her soul, Her body, Her life, all belong to Him. Well may She repeat the word of the canticle: "My Beloved is all to me, and I am all to Him."

O Virgin! O Mother most admirable! How cold and languid is our love when compared to Thine! Instead of concentrating itself on its true object, it spreads itself on creatures and on earthly goods; it runs from one object to an-

other, making trial of all, content with nothing, and never knowing that it can only be satisfied with the Sovereign Good.

Instead of compassion for our Lord, our love only seeks satisfaction and joy for itself. Like the carnal Jews, it is scandalized at the adorable helplessness and the touching wretchedness of the Infant God. The crib, the swaddling-clothes, the dispossessed Sovereign, without greatness or prestige, is something they had not dreamt of. They preferred an opulent monarch who would invite them to take part in his good-fortune and give them a continual feast. Are we not sometimes as blind ?

Instead of strict attention to the holy will of God, our love often gives ear to the voice of its own inconstant desires ; and even in the spiritual life, to which it makes pretensions, it finds ways and means to make its own fancies and caprices prevail against good counsels and wise admonitions.

Instead of being all devoted to God, our love tends too often to keep back or give sparingly that which was once offered to Him without reserve ; and for its small generosity it bitterly complains of never receiving enough in return.

Oh, how poor is our love ! How poor the vase, the heart, that contains it ! Yet I desire to love my Jesus. I desire it in the depths of my heart. Take my love, O Holy Mother, and make it like Thine !

IV.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—MARY AND THE LAW OF GOD.

WHAT is the meaning of the mystery of the Purification? Is it that Mary should be subject to the legal observances that bind sinners?

The fall of our first parents unchained passions at first held captive. These passions sullied and stained the conception and birth of every human creature, and, to complete the misfortune, every child born of woman was stricken with the divine malediction. Every mother bore in her womb a child of death, and with pain brought a sinner into the world. Here is the reason why God required Her purification. But Mary is purity itself. The awful law of sin was suspended in Her favor, and, whilst every conception and every birth around Her were corrupted by sin, Her conception and birth were sanctified by grace. God, in whose sight the angels are not pure, calls Her "all fair and without stain" (Cant. iv. 7). The Mother of the Word incarnate conceived in purity and brought forth without pain. Overshadowed by the power of the Most High, Her virginity suffered no detriment when She conceived of the Holy Ghost. Before, and during, and after Her child-bearing She is a virgin. Why, therefore, Her purification?

It is the law. Mary desired to give an example of respect and submission along with Her divine Son. Tenderly She bears Jesus in Her arms; She presses His heart to Hers, Her ears to His lips, and He seems to say to Her already what He will so often repeat in His public life: "One iota or one tittle shall not pass from the law till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v. 18).

She submits Herself, therefore, to an observance to which She is not obliged, for the edification of the Jews, who would not have understood Her abstention, but more especially for the edification of Christians, whom She thus engages in a perfect reverence for the law of God. "It is the law!" Behold, Christian soul, what you ought to say every time you find yourselves in presence of a commandment of God or of the Church, or of your lawful superiors. Away with vain protests conjured up by the imagination to obtain dispensations! Away with false reasonings, the inspirations of self-love and sensuality! You put forward the delicate state of your health; are you sure that it will be made more feeble by your observance? Business is pressing; but is it really true that it will suffer by the rest God requires of you, by the Mass you ought to hear, by the prayer you ought to offer? You urge the duties of society, in which no failure is allowed; but should you not be agreeable and pleasing to God before being so to men? Your dignity is offended by the tyrannical commands of your own equals; but what is this

dignity of a sinner in relation to the will of him who, while it lasts, represents the will of God? And will it not contribute to your perfection if you take a humiliation in good part?

You speak of natural repugnances; let them be conquered. The word of our Lord is plain: "Narrow is the way that leadeth to life" (Matt. vii.); and again: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi.)

Away with all distinctions between grave and light observances! Everything is grave when there is question of eternal salvation and of perfection which is its price. God blesses the servants who are "faithful over a few things, and invites them to participate in the joy of the Lord."

Away with those negligences which you so readily permit under the pretext that they bind your conscience but lightly! One light fault brings on another. The soul that is entangled in light faults easily stumbles and often falls most disgracefully. "Who loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii.)

Onward, Christians! It is the law. Show yourselves generous, like your holy Mother, in the love of God, the salvation of your soul, the perfection of your life; in the edification of those who look to you for an example, and whom you may so easily draw to the faithful service of God. Not a step outside the law till all be fulfilled!

V.

THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE—MARY SEEKS FOR JESUS.

MARY and Joseph, having journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the paschal solemnity, were returning to Nazareth when the great feast was ended. Separated from one another, according to the custom of these pious pilgrimages, they did not perceive till the end of a day's journey that Jesus was not with them. They sought Him among their relations and acquaintances; they go from the men, who travelled separately from the women, to these latter, and from the women again to the men; they inquire, they anxiously repeat the inquiry, they conjure their neighbors to tell them if they have seen their precious and holy Child. But no one has seen Him.

What anguish! What bitter grief for the heart of that Mother who, during twelve years, has lived a life of ecstasy, absorbed in the contemplation of His perfections! Day by day She saw in Him new graces of soul and body. Her whole life is in Him. Having inquired for Him among all the groups of travellers She met, She returned to Jerusalem to pour forth Her grief in the Temple of God.

O marvel! A Child of twelve years has placed Himself among the doctors of the law,

astonishing them by the depth of His questions and the wisdom of His answers. It is He! What happiness! All the anguish of Her sorrowful search vanishes in an instant in the joy of possession.

To seek Jesus Christ is the first duty of the soul that has lost Him; to find Him again is the greatest happiness of all. It behooves us to perform the duty quickly, so as to enjoy as quickly the unspeakable reward; delays always make the search more difficult, and often make it fruitless. "Seek the Lord while He may be found," says the prophet Isaias, lv. 6. But oh, how many live in criminal indifference when Jesus has withdrawn Himself far away from them, driven off by sin! To the sweet and loving Master whose authority weighs upon their will so lightly have succeeded implacable tyrants whom they cannot satisfy. Their true Friend, whose holy and salutary presence filled their souls with peace and confidence, has given place to infuriated enemies who are the poison of to-day and the despair of to-morrow. But, alas! they know not the loss they have sustained; it may be they wish to forget it. Perchance they are afraid of the return of their Saviour. Let us entreat them to think of their state, let us bewail their misfortune, let us pray for them, let us beg our holy Mother to obtain for them the grace to feel how bitter and how hard a thing it is to live estranged from a God so amiable and so good. Let us ask Her to conduct them into the temple in which Jesus dwells, in which He speaks by august signs,

sometimes by the mouths of His priests and oftener by the grace which flows from His tabernacle. May She engage Her divine Son to make the first advances towards the conversion of these poor souls; and, finally, may She prepare them with paternal solicitude for the inexpressible joy of finding Her Son by a true conversion. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Mother of sinners, draw all those souls to an earnest search for Jesus who have lost Him, and bring Him back to those in whom He no longer dwells.

As to ourselves, let us reflect upon our actual state; let us ask ourselves in all earnestness, Where is Jesus? If His sweet voice responds to our call, if He makes us enjoy the consolations of His presence and feel the pious emotions of His grace, let us bless Him and rejoice in Him. If, on the other hand, to prove our love for Him or to punish our numerous infidelities, He veils His face and hides Himself from us, leaving us afflicted with the want of all sensible consolations, let us not be cast down, but rather seek Him more earnestly than ever. Let us seek Him by desires and prayers, by tears of repentance, the correction of our faults, and the multiplication of our good works. We should seek Him especially in the Sacraments in which His grace abides, in His tabernacle, which is especially His dwelling-place, and in the loving care of His holy Mother, who awaits the propitious moment to bring Him back to us.

The Dolorous Mysteries.

VI.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN—PRESENTIMENTS OF MARY.

WHEN Mary presented Her Child in the temple She heard a sad and mournful prophecy. It was the word of the holy old man Simeon: "A sword shall pierce thy heart" (Luke ii.) The prophecy is already fulfilled. Mary suffered bitter anguish when She carried Her Child to a foreign land to escape the persecution of Herod; again when sorrowing She sought Him after She had lost Him; again when during His public life She saw Him living on the bread of charity and having no place to lay His head. She suffered keenly when the prophecies of the Saviour announcing His Passion and cruel death recalled to Her mind the oracles She had read in the Temple. But now the day of Her greatest sorrow is come.

Jesus rises from the supper-table. She well knows whither He is going, and, although She is not near the scene of His agony, She receives into Her heart its mysterious rebounds. Whilst the chosen disciples sleep and forget their Master, Mary watches and prays. Her maternal

presentiment represents to Her in all its horror the agony in the garden. Like Jesus She is seized with a mortal languor, a strange sadness and fear. With Him She cries out, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," at the same time prostrating Herself upon the earth. Like Him She cries out to the Father in Heaven, "O my Father! let this chalice pass from me." Am I not mistaken? Do I not rather hear Her say, "Give this chalice to me with all its dolors, but spare my beloved Child"? She is His Mother, more tender and more loving than any other mother. "O Father of my Well-beloved!" She would say, "why strike an innocent victim? Even better than I you know this sweet Lamb. In heaven He is the splendor of your substance, the image of your glory; and I, from the moment in which I first felt the signs of maternity until this sad hour, have always seen Him full of grace and of wisdom and of goodness. He was submissive to your sacred laws—His food was to do your will. He went about doing good. Take pity, oh, take pity on Him now! Strike sinners, whose likeness He has assumed; strike me, His unworthy Mother, but lift your chastising hand from Him. Do not subject me to bitter grief for having pronounced His death-warrant when to the glorious promises made I said: '*Be it done unto me according to Thy word.*' O Father! take this chalice from His lips."

Is it that God will not allow Himself to be moved by the touching appeal of a mother? Ah! no. It is that His inexorable and infinite

justice must be satisfied. Divinely enlightened by grace, Mary clearly sees what is exacted of Him; She knows that the salvation of mankind depends upon the merciful substitution of the innocent for the guilty. With Jesus She submits to the will of Her Heavenly Father; with Jesus She is in agony; with Jesus She would die if She had not been, like Him, sustained by a power from on high. O sorrowful Mother! not content with having taken part in the doleful conflict which the Child of your womb sustained in the Garden of Olives, you also wish to engage in the conflicts of your children by adoption. These combats are renewed every day—yes, every instant—there are so many enemies within us and around us, and we are assailed so often by the contradictions, infirmities, and miseries of this earthly life. And sometimes the contest rages in such a way that we, too, feel a mortal sadness, and our souls are so burdened with the weariness of battle and so cast down by fear that they are almost ready to fall from discouragement into despair. Jesus has well commanded us "to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." But are we stronger than the apostles to resist the unhappy sleep which must assure the triumph of temptation? Alas! too often we have had experience of our weakness. We have need of feeling the presence and of hearing the voice of our Mother. Health of the weak! Refuge of sinners! Comforter of the afflicted! Help of Christians! watch and pray for us that we may

come forth victorious from the combats of this life—victorious by the deep resolve never to offend God whatever else may happen, victorious by patience and resignation to the will of God in all our misfortunes.

VII.

THE SCOURGING OF OUR LORD—THE TEARS OF MARY.

IT is a pious tradition that, during the days of our Lord's Passion, Mary felt an invincible attraction to the places in which He suffered. When She heard that He had fallen into the hands of His enemies She desired to verify with Her own eyes the events, a foreknowledge of which She had obtained from Her reading of the Sacred Scriptures and through the confidential revelations of Her beloved Son.

Thus was She in the near vicinity of the pretorium, supported by the arms of holy women, during the scourging of Jesus. She saw the sinister yet unmistakable preparations for the execution of that cruel sentence. She heard the strokes of the thongs and lashes which fell by the thousand on the sacred body of the Saviour. She heard the executioners, robust soldiers, encourage one another in their cruel work. She heard their cynical and barbarous jests, and the deep, sweet groans of their Victim. It was flesh of Her flesh that was thus torn; it was blood of Her blood that ran upon the ground. True, Her virginal body was not reached by these cruel strokes, but Her mother's heart was torn to pieces, so great was Her sym-

pathy in Her Son's suffering. It was by tears Her heart-breaking anguish was expressed. Tears as well as blood wear away the life. Death results from too great a loss of blood and from too much weeping as well. Mary is bathed in tears, and they run down to the ground to be mingled in Her Son's blood.

What an object of pity, O Christian soul! You cannot turn your eyes from Jesus, all covered with blood, without turning them on Mary bathed in tears. Let your soul, penetrated with shame and sorrow, carry you blushing and humbled to the feet of Christ in His scourging and to His Mother in tears.

It is the sin of the flesh they together expiate in this flagellation. In the beginning of the world's history we know that its impurities were washed out by a deluge; another was required to wash away the impurities of pagan nations—yea, even of Christian nations, too.

Sanctified by the grace of God, incorporated in Christ, we do not seem to know how to respect the flesh in which a purified soul should dwell as in a tabernacle; and too often, in contempt of the sacrament by which we receive a new life, we carry our contingent of infection to the collected mass of shameful sins that dishonor the world.

Thus it is that another deluge is required to wash away these crimes. We see it in the mystery of our Lord's scourging. It is the deluge of blood shed by our Saviour; it is the deluge of tears that flow from the eyes of Mary. These saving floods have called forth others.

The saints understood them well, and, not content with purifying themselves in the blood of Jesus or in the tears of Mary, they made executioners of themselves in regard to their own flesh, chastising it without pity, imprisoning it in their instruments of torture, and opening wounds through which flowed their generous blood. They have been prodigal in blood and tears, and have exhausted their lives therein to prevent or to expiate the disorders of the flesh.

Read their history and you will tremble at the recital of the punishments they inflicted on themselves. Worldlings of easy life and fond of pleasure affect to be scandalized; they cry out: Barbarism, extravagance, folly! Let us rather admire their heroism; let us beg of Jesus and Mary the grace to chastise the sins of the flesh by its voluntary martyrdom.

But no; we are afraid. We are told that our flesh is something sacred. The pleasures which the world offers may indeed be cast off, but we fortify ourselves with wise precautions; care is taken that nothing hurts our health. Weakness and inabilities of various kinds are brought forward to excuse us from the penances imposed by the Church. The hard stones would injure our knees if we knelt on them. In a word, the evil forces of the body seem to be carefully preserved, as if it was determined to drag down the soul into unhappy faults.

Again, how well it would be if you knew how to weep! if you knew how to save your tears for the mysterious baptism of penance! You weep over the affections which Providence has

broken—just in time, perhaps, to prevent them from becoming disastrous ; you weep on account of your conflicting caprices, over broken fortune, over fallen ambition, over lying reports and imaginary evils.

There are tears of tenderness ill-regulated, tears of vexation, tears of wrath, tears of discouragement and of despair, tears of ridiculous sensibility ; but tears of shame and repentance for sin, tears that strengthen and purify the soul—I seldom see them in your eyes.

Christians, I conjure you, shake off this cowardice, correct this folly. If, in the presence of Christ torn with scourges, you have not strength to punish on the flesh the sins of the flesh: say at least with the prophet in presence of the sorrowing Mother : "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that I may mourn night and day for those whom the flesh has destroyed in the house of my God ?"

VIII.

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS—MARY'S PROTESTATIONS.

O SWEETEST Mother! is your heart not yet broken by the doleful emotions resulting from the scourging of your Son? Retire from the awful scene of His dolors. Suffice it to follow in spirit the horrible drama which can only end by His infamous death on the cross. Your heart will have suffered more than the heart of any other mother if it confines itself to meditate in solitude on the oracles now almost accomplished, and which, alas! you know too well. O Mother of tender compassion, come away!

But She will not; She will see Him again when the soldiers, after having loaded Him with insults, clothe Him as a mock-king and crown Him with thorns, thus presenting Him to the people. At a distance Mary witnesses the horrible scene expressed in the immortal words, *Ecce Homo*—"Behold the Man." It is the word of Pilate. It is taken up with cruel derision by the crowd. Not a word of pity is heard. On the contrary, shouts full of contempt and anger fill the air. O His grief-stricken Mother! How She must suffer! Every thorn that pierces the head of Her Son pierces Her heart; every blasphemous word She hears

grossly insults Her love. The thorns She accepts with resignation, but She repels the blasphemies by acts of profound and sublime adoration.

O my Jesus! She would say, true King of Wisdom! true Solomon indeed, you have called me and I am come, like the daughter of Sion, to behold the diadem with which your cruel step-mother, the Jewish Synagogue, has encircled your brow. She endeavors to turn into mockery your eternal royalty; but in spite of her jealous fury, in spite of your deep humiliations, you will always be King of angels and of men; King of *all true Israelites;* King of the entire world; King of my heart. More than ever do I believe in the words of the angel who, in the name of the Eternal Father, promised you the throne of David your father and a kingdom that shall have no end. *Ave Rex!*—Hail, O King!

These are the protestations of His holy Mother. Let us unite in them with our whole heart. If grinding care and bitter anguish and deep disgrace should be our lot, let us accept them joyfully as the thorns of our lives, sent us by the hand of God. But above all things let us protest with all the force of our Christian love against the blasphemies which insult our divine Master Jesus Christ. In this our day there seems to be no obstacle to the blasphemies of impious men; no fear of God, no human law, no revolt of public opinion. We see them shamelessly spread abroad in our daily papers, which a morbid curiosity literally devours. It

is one of the greatest sins of the day. Yet our rulers and our law-makers of whom repression is demanded tell us they see in it no crime. No crime! O my Saviour, to treat Thee as Thou wert treated by Thy executioners at the time of Thy Passion! No crime publicly to insult the supreme majesty of God, when the reputation of the most obscure, or even of the meanest, of men is protected by human law! What a sad reversal of all order! What an infamy! Let us never, through indifference or insensibility, be accomplices of the scandalous indulgence of which modern rulers and legislators are guilty when they refuse to avenge the outraged honor of God. And in order to atone, as far as we can, for the public blasphemies that daily offend the divine Majesty, let us, with our holy Mother, protest against them by heartfelt and profound acts of adoration. Let us say to Jesus, our holy Saviour: "Listen, O Lord! to the strong cry of our faith and of our love rising high above the contempt and injuries of a senseless multitude! Hail, O King! *Ave Rex!* Hail! In our eyes humiliation takes nothing from Thy glory. To us Thou wilt always be the Word of God, the splendor of His glory, the mirror of His eternal perfections, the gift of His infinite love, our own heavenly King. We will ever be Thy humble and faithful subjects, so much the more respectful and submissive as Thou hast been more grievously offended."

Let us not content ourselves even with this general protestation, but every time we hear or

read of a blasphemy offered to God let us answer by words of adoration and praise: "May the name of the Lord be blessed from henceforth, now and for ever" (Psalm cxii.) "To the King of ages, immortal and invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. i. 17).

May Jesus, our King, put into our hearts and on our lips as many words of praise and benediction as there are words of malediction on the lips of the impious.

IX.

THE CARRIAGE OF THE CROSS—MARY ON THE WAY TO CALVARY.

WHILST Jesus is conducted to the place of crucifixion He falls on His face several times under the cross He is forced to carry. A few compassionate voices are heard saying: "Alas, He dies!" Ah! no. He saves the little strength that remains until it shall have been entirely spent on that bitter cross. When He rises from His fall He is all covered with mire and blood. On the right and on the left the crowd enjoy the spectacle; and barbarous and cynical reflections are cast upon Him. All at once there is silence. A pale and tottering woman, supported by pious and friendly females, is pointed out. She braves the fury of the executioners and soldiers, and, with faltering steps, approaches the Condemned. In a low voice some murmur: "It is His Mother! Ah, poor woman!" And others say: "Blessed are those who have never been mothers, if their children should come to this!" Pitied, insulted, rebuffed, Mary is with Her Son. Oh, what a heartrending scene! Bathed in tears, the Virgin Mother casts herself kneeling at the feet of the holy Victim, and, embracing Him, cries out: "O my Son, my dear Son!" And Jesus, in a trembling voice, answers: "O Mother, my dear

Mother!" The sad meeting lasts but an instant, for Mary, crushed with grief, falls fainting into the arms of the holy women.

O Mother of sorrows! why have you come? Must you not have foreseen that this meeting would grievously aggravate the pain of your dearly Beloved? Without doubt our divine Master is afflicted at seeing the grief of His Mother; but He is also profoundly consoled at the public testimony she gives of Her love.

She braves contempt and anger to come to Him; and when nearly the whole world condemns and curses Him She strives to cover Him in Her devoted heart, uttering the words: "I adore Thee and I love Thee." Cruel executioners! now you may insult and strike Him. Jesus has found, in meeting His Mother, compensation for all your injuries, for all your barbarities.

Jesus looks for the same consolation from you, O Christian soul! in the dolorous way which impious men still mark out for Him. Just now you resolve to protest against the injuries heaped upon your Saviour by the secret homage of faith and love. This is something; but it is not enough. Do better. Show yourself openly on His side; trample under-foot all human fears and make manifest your religious sentiments before the world in all circumstances. It is cheap and easy love that feasts itself on greatness that has no enemies. But it is noble and glorious to take part publicly with the persecuted. The friends of the unfortunate are the only true friends.

Are you, then, of that easy-going class who believe and adore Jesus, indeed, in the depth of their hearts, yet who for His sake will not confront His enemies? These people are mute before blasphemers, as if God were no more than a stranger to them, as if their faith was a weakness to be concealed from all eyes. Worse still: whilst their wounded conscience writhes and groans at the outrage, they admire and almost venerate the talent and ability with which He who gave them is abased, and with impotent smiles everywhere compensate those who mock, with spirit, holy things. But there is something still worse: these half-Christians often lie to their convictions by sacrilegious admissions, and end by making common cause, at least outwardly, with the enemies of God. Certainly prudence requires that we enter not into discussions in which our inexperience or want of ability might injure the cause we wish to defend. Certainly there may be inopportune and inappropriate methods of defence which offend self-love, excite the anger of the impious, and render them more obstinate in contradiction and in blasphemy. But an energetic denial, a grave, measured, and sympathetic word, cannot fail to be effectual; and, if we do not venture these, surely a sad countenance and eyes filled with tears are always to the purpose, and always argue better than long discourses.

But once again I say, Christians, let us openly manifest ourselves. Let us console by our external homage and our religious sentiments the offended heart of our Saviour. If the Church in-

vites us to some manifestation of faith and love, let us obey her with alacrity. The enemies of God will be less bold if they see us on the side of His friends. Their desire is to abolish God's festivals and disperse His friends so as to weaken them. It was so in the days of the royal prophet, who makes God's enemies thus speak in the seventy-third Psalm: "Let us abolish all the festival-days of God from the land." Timid and vacillating souls who are frightened and disconcerted by blasphemy will take courage when they see that Jesus is still really loved and adored. God, prepared to avenge His outraged glory, will hold back the thunderbolts of His anger, "for one soul fearing and adoring Him is better than a thousand impious" (Ecclus. xvi. 3). And then our Lord's dolorous way to Calvary will in truth become a triumphal march.

X.

THE CRUCIFIXION—MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

"OH, all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow; for He hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of His fierce anger" (Lamen. of Jer. i. 12). It is Mary as well as Jesus that addresses us in these sad words of the prophet. Jerusalem, the joyous rendezvous of the sacred festivities; Jerusalem, which the prophet makes to utter these words in his Lamentations, was less desolated by the brutal hand of the infidel than was the soul of Mary by the unrelenting severity of God's justice.

We are on Golgotha. Jesus, hanging between heaven and earth, begets in His dolors a new race, an elect people, a holy family. For the family to be complete it must have a mother. Behold Her! A woman in tears takes Her place at the foot of the cross.

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat filius.

"See the Mother stands deploring,
By the Cross Her tears outpouring,
Where Her Son expiring hangs."

She is there to express the more strongly the

power of the will which united Her in the sacrifice of Her Saviour; She is there to receive more keenly in Her sad and desolate soul the rebound of the sufferings of Her Well-Beloved, the inexorable stroke of that sword with which She was threatened on the day of the Presentation in the Temple:

> Cujus animam gementem,
> Contristatam et dolentem,
> Pertransivit gladius.
>
> "For Her gentle spirit's groaning,
> Anguish-smiten and bemoaning,
> Rend the sword's most cruel pang."

Held by two loves—the love of Her Son and the love of Christian humanity—She decides in our favor. Her love for Her Child, the fruit of Her womb, urges Her to ask for Him the favor of Heaven. Remember it is Her only Son of whom there is question. She has only Him; Her only Son, He owes His life to Her alone! But however tender, profound, and unutterable the love of the Virgin Mother may be, Her love for us forces from Her holy soul a *fiat* by which She conceives us and makes us spiritually born of Her. To the blood which flows from the wounds of the Saviour, to the death which presses on to the final scene of the awful drama of the Crucifixion, to the torments which She Herself endures, She still answers: "Fiat! fiat!" Let it be done! let it be done! But Jesus does not wait for the final issue of His sufferings. He presents to Mary the entire human race in the person of

St. John, saying to Her: "Woman, behold thy Son"; and to the human race He presents Mary, saying: "Behold thy Mother" (John xix.)

O Virgin most amiable! Virgin most pure! to give a new life to a sinful world you were obliged to participate in the pains of a tragic child-bearing indeed. Without pain you brought forth your Child Jesus; but, like another Eve, you could not bring forth children of regeneration without feeling the effects of the malediction pronounced against the first Eve: "Thou shalt bring forth children in pain" (Gen. iii.) How would you have been able to exercise your rights of Mother over the human race, if you had not acquired them in the same manner as Jesus Christ acquired the rights of a Father?

Let us meditate on this sweet and consoling thought—Mary is our Mother. She is our Mother, and we are the children of Her dolorous compassion. Is not this sufficient to tell us how much we ought to love Her? Sorrow is the mysterious cause of the love, so tender and so profound, that unites the heart of the son to the heart of the mother; and when he finds out the history of all the tears, of all the anguish, of all the pains that his birth into the world cost her, his love is enhanced all the more. Mary is our Mother. For us, Her children according to the law of grace, She sacrificed Her Child according to nature. Is not this enough to explain to us how much confidence we ought to have in Her? The great mercy with which Her heart

was filled on Calvary pursues us still ; it encompasses us on all sides and covers us with maternal protection. In our anguish She consoles us, in our sufferings She assists us, in temptation She comes to our rescue, in the death of sin She watches over us night and day. Like Respha, who stood by the gibbet of her sons to keep the birds of prey from devouring their dead bodies, Mary watches by the soul dead in sin to prevent the infernal beasts and birds of prey from devouring what remains of its miserable life. She lovingly awaits and strongly excites the motives of grace by which we are pressed forward to seek a refuge in Her arms.

Mary is our Mother. She opens Her wounded heart to us. This is the same as to say that every indulgence and every indifference offends Her ; that to be worthy of Her we ought, at least, to accept with resignation the trials God sends us, even if we have not the courage voluntarily to seek suffering.

Mother of holy love, make me feel the full force of your sorrow, that I may weep with you ; unite my tears with yours, my compassion with yours, that I may be able to please you.

Eia mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

. . . . .

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

"Grant, O Mother, love's outspringing!
Me to feel Thy sorrow's wringing,
Bid me share Thy cup of woe.

. . . . . .

With Thee weeping in communion,
With the Crucified in union,
Long as life within me stays."

The Glorious Mysteries.

XI.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS—THE JOYS OF MARY.

WE read in the Gospel that Jesus, after His Resurrection, appeared many times to His disciples: To Simon Peter, to the disciples of Emmaus, to Magdalen in the garden of the sepulchre, to the apostles assembled in the upper room and on the shores of the lake of Tiberias. Can we suppose, even for an instant, that He deprived His Most Holy Mother of these apparitions? The supposition would be injurious to the most amiable Heart of Jesus, to the most loved and most loving of sons.

The humility of the Holy Virgin concealed the touching and glorious mysteries of love which rejoiced Her heart after the sad and sorrowful days of the Passion; but our faith can easily penetrate the veil by which the Mother and the Son hid from all human eyes their sacred and intimate communications.

Mary had taken the greatest part in the sufferings of the Saviour; She ought also to have the greatest part in the joys of His Resurrection. She was first at the martyrdom; She ought to

be first in the triumph. This is in order. Besides the divine promises, which constantly brought suffering and consolation nearer to each other, nature itself tells us what our Blessed Saviour would do for His Most Holy Mother.

The first desire of a dutiful and well-born son is to make his mother participate in the joy of a great victory. I cannot imagine that the Conqueror of hell and death would trample under-foot this law of nature. Even in the absence of the testimony of the Gospel I cling to the belief of those holy souls who, in meditating upon the mystery of the Resurrection, have always seen the Blessed Virgin enjoy before all others the presence of her risen Son.

At the moment in which the stone was rolled away from His tomb Jesus was with His Mother. With sweet and familiar voice He addresses Her: O my Mother! And Mary, crushed with grief, rising as if it were from the slumber of death, cries out: O my Son! What tender outpourings! What blessed caresses! What heavenly conversations! To the tortures of separation succeed the delights of reunion.

Let us assist at the interviews of Jesus and Mary. Let us felicitate our Mother upon Her great happiness, and address Her in the Canticle of the Church: "Queen of Heaven, rejoice, for He whom Thou didst bear in Thy womb is risen, as He said. Pray to Him for us. Eternal glory be to God!" Rejoice, O Mother! rejoice in the fulness of Thy heart in presence of

Thy Well-Beloved! Thou wert mindful of us in the death of Thy Son; Thou wilt not forget us in His Resurrection. Pray to Him for us:

For us, who are children of a Church that would long since have been crushed under the persecution which the powers of darkness had let loose upon her, if the divine Founder had not promised her immortality:

For us, sorrowful children of a country (France) humiliated, torn with divisions, held by divine justice on the brink of an abyss which may any day become her everlasting tomb:

For us, cold Christians, whose dying life drags itself with difficulty along the rough pathway of the commandments:

For us and for those who, by blood and love, are ours; for sinners whom we love and who are too long buried in the deadly sleep of iniquity.

Offer to God our prayers for our relatives and friends whose bodies are covered by the earth around us, and whose suffering souls await but the call of Heaven to fly to His bosom who is the resurrection and the life.

O Queen! O Virgin! O Mother! pray for us, and pour down upon our prayers and upon our souls, upon the souls of those dear to us, upon our country, upon the Church, and upon the whole world the breathings of the Resurrection. To every creature who is chained down by grief, by sin, by death, give power today to sing a joyous *Alleluia*.

XII.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD INTO HEAVEN—THE SPIRITUAL ASCENSION OF MARY.

IT is the fortieth day after the Resurrection Those whom Jesus most loved, having been attracted by the departure of His sacred humanity to heaven, were assembled on Mount Olivet. Mary is there; She is first among them all and most affected by the farewell words of Her divine Son. For a long time she fixes Her gaze, like the apostles, upon the bright cloud which hid from Her sight Her only love. Her eyes, indeed, see Him no more, but Her enraptured soul follows Him beyond the hierarchies of angels to the very throne of the Most High, where He, the Conqueror of death and King of glory, in company with the souls He had freed from their prison, takes possession of His eternal empire.

Awaking from Her ecstasy, our holy Mother feels Herself truly alone in a land of exile; but She does not give Herself to barren grief or to those weaknesses of nature which so cruelly try our poor hearts when God calls to Himself those whom we love, and the void caused by whose absence we so keenly feel. Their presence was so dear to us that we can hardly be consoled even when they departed in the midst of benedictions, and when we have heard them express

joy at being delivered from the evils of this life. "They rejoice in the things that are said to them, and they will enter into the house of the Lord."

But we are imperfect; Mary is perfection itself. The departure of Her Son enlivens Her hopes and implants in Her heart the magnanimous resolution of advancing always until the hour in which God will make Her a participant in the happiness of heaven.

Ever tending thither, the soul of our holy Mother becomes more perfect day by day. And it is for the glory of God and for our encouragement She thus labors for Her perfection. It seems to me I hear Her maternal voice constantly inviting me to "rise higher and still higher." Thus does She speak to me:

You are purified from sin, from every stain of the soul; you have risen from the debasement of human dignity, from the deprivation of the Divine Life; you detest sin more than any other evil that can befall you; you would rather die than commit it again. It is well; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

You have a horror for light faults which grieve the Spirit of God and which human frailty has so much trouble to avoid. If the impetuosity of nature should outrun the commands of your will, your heart resents it and is troubled, for it would rather live to God free from even the slightest stain. True, "the just man sins seven times a day," but if you could you would not sin at all. This is very well; but do better. "Rise higher still." *Excelsior!*

You bear bravely the combats of virtue. There is not one of your passions that has not

received a mortal blow; alone in the world, detached from its goods and enjoyments, you have barred and bolted all the doors of your soul against its maxims and seductions. That is excellent; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

Not only do you bear with resignation and patience the heavy cross God has sent you, but you march gladly forward on the road of Calvary, anxious for humiliations and sufferings, the better to imitate your Saviour. Contemptible in your own eyes and glad to be contemned by others, you wish to be able to say with the apostle: "We are made the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all even till now" (1 Cor. iv. 13). All this is well indeed; but "rise higher still." *Excelsior!*

Your soul is enlightened; all virtues shine in it as in a mirror. You have no happiness only in God; you seek His presence continually; you desire His presence always; you constantly seek His loving embraces. This is rising very high; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

You possess God by divine charity. You are united with Him as with the most loving spouse. This is the end of perfection on earth, but it is not yet the supreme perfection. *Excelsior!*

Higher still! Behold the steps in this mystic ladder: purity without a shadow, the reward of trial, the crowning of victories won, the consummation of virtues, the presence of God without a veil, the revelation of the divine essence, peace, joy, everlasting gladness in the eternal union, heaven whither Jesus has ascended—heaven to which He calls us and in which He opens His arms to receive us.

XIII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST—MARY THE SOURCE OF GRACE.

BEFORE ascending into heaven Jesus said to His disciples: "You shall not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which you have heard by My mouth." Faithful to this command, "they retired to an upper room, where they were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren." Behold what we read in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. From the most venerable traditions we learn that, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, He first rested on the head of our Holy Virgin Mother as a shaft of light, which immediately spread itself on the heads of the whole assembly in the form of tongues of fire.

Precious indications and blessed image of Mary's mediation!

Her intercessory power is thus solemnly recognized by Her children in the very cradle of the Church. They are still deeply affected by the remembrance of their want of courage during the sad days of the Passion; they feel their unworthiness and the need they have of uniting their prayers with those of the ever-faithful Virgin. Was She not associated on Calvary in

the painful birth into the world of a holy nation and a purchased people? Is She not the Mother of the regenerated family which is to renew the face of the earth? No one so well as She can bend to Her the ear of God. The maternal rights which She possessed over Him whom She bore in Her womb, and who obeyed Her during His life on earth, are not surrendered; She can revive them any time. The more perfect is the Son, the more powerful is the Mother. Mary does not command; She entreats. Every prayer united with Hers, passing through Her maternal heart and virginal lips, is tinged with Her love and Her purity, and entering effectually, nay, victoriously, into the heart of the great Mediator, becomes in a measure divine and irresistible.

All graces may be obtained by Mary; all graces come to us through Her. The holy Fathers represent Her to us as the mysterious channel through which the benefits of the Divinity are spread upon the earth. In the mystical body of the Church She is that movable aqueduct, full of fertilizing channels, which unites the head to the trunk. She is the deep bosom in which all goods are stored and from which they are distributed. She is the medium through which God's gifts must pass. In Herself full of all graces, St. Bernard says She is superabundant for us.

Let us admire this marvel of divine mercy, and have recourse earnestly and confidently to this superabundance.

We are much more ungrateful and disloyal

than the apostles were during our Lord's Passion, and are, in consequence, much more unworthy to address ourselves to the Blessed Majesty of God. Let us, like them, "pray with Mary, the Mother of Jesus." Let us, like infants, commit our feeble hearts to the keeping of Her heart and ask every grace through Her all-powerful intercession.

We should, however, be reasonable and discreet in our demands. The altars of Our Mother are often besieged by an eager throng of supplicants, who force upon Her tender beneficence the temporal interests in which alone they are preoccupied. Our health, our affairs, our affections, our troubles, and our sufferings certainly deserve the attention of the Virgin most clement. But these affect the great affair of our salvation and of our perfection only in a distant way. Purity of soul, the conflicts of virtue, our advancement in the knowledge and love of God, are far more worthy to fix the attention of the Mother of divine grace.

Let us, then, beg of Her, above and before all else, the graces of newness of life as well as of progress in good and union with God, which the divine Paraclete will, at Her request, pour forth upon our souls. True it is that She cannot send the Holy Spirit upon us of Her own authority, for He obeys but the Father and the Son. But if She calls Him for us, if Her sweet and strong voice should make the heavens resound with the invocation, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, the miracle of Pentecost will renew itself in

our lives. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and the fear of the Lord—all the gifts of the Holy Spirit—will become our portion if we pray with Mary and through Her.

XIV.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—THE DESIRES OF MARY.

IN the Fourth Book of Kings we read that the prophet Elias, without passing through the gates of death, was raised to heaven in a fiery chariot. Why, it will be asked, did not God show the same magnificence to His Mother? Why did He not send down His angels to anticipate and prevent the death which the Mother of His Son was to endure? The prompt resurrection of the Most Holy Virgin and Her glorious assumption into heaven are assuredly great privileges. But would not the total exemption from death have been more glorious and more just at the same time? It was by sin death entered into the world; but Mary was exempt from the least stain of sin. Having been conceived in the grace of God, it would seem that She had a rightful claim upon immortality. Sin and death are connected with one another in the designs of God; so likewise are original grace and immortality.

Let us not trouble ourselves. What God does is well done. In truth, death had no more rightful claim over Mary than over Her divine Son. Neither the tempest of His agony, nor the fury of His executioners, nor the tortures of the Crucifixion, nor the effusion of His blood

through a thousand wounds could have caused the death of Christ the Son of God. Neither the anguish of Her compassion, nor the breaking of Her heart as She stood by his cross, nor the infirmities of age and of nature could have caused the death of the Immaculate Mother of our Saviour. The prophet Isaias tells us that Christ was offered up as a victim "because He willed it." Mary, after the example of Her Son, is offered and dies because She willed it. It is Her love of God that places Mary on the bed of death around which the apostles stand weeping.

From the day of the Ascension Mary was agitated by the desire of being reunited with Her Son. Her long exile was nothing but the languishing of love. This intense love was sufficient to wear away Her life and to break the ties which bound Her to this earth. This world, when stripped by death of those to whom we have given our hearts, appears no more anything but a dreary desert in which a thousand phantoms play with us and fatigue us with their presence as well as with their absence. There is only enough of the reality, it seems, to fix our lives in it while it lasts. There is only a sickly exaggeration of ill-regulated affections which we lavish upon creatures. This was not the nature of Mary's languishing. All Her love was centred in Her Son; but it was not for Herself alone She desired to leave the world in which She still loved those whom Jesus loved and had confided to Her care. In heaven God is better known, better loved, better glori-

fied. Behold the reason why Mary languishes to be there; behold why Her holy soul, by a last effort, detaches itself from Her unstained body in order to bring it to perfection by its absence. Not one of the common accidents which affect us could ever have broken the most holy union of the spirit and the flesh in this Virgin most Admirable. She gives Herself to Death, but Death would not dare to lay his cold hand upon Her.

Poor sinners that we are, we dare not hope that Death will have such respect for us. Cruel labor without rest weakens our nature and steals away from it every instant some particle of life. Whether with a good grace or a bad grace, we must certainly submit. Yet God wishes that even this hard necessity should turn to our advantage, and that the desire of death should become one of our greatest merits.

But what kind of a desire is this? I see and I hear Christians who wish to die. Some of them say to Death: "Snatch me from this vale of tears, and bring me to a land of joy which I so much desire; deliver me from the miseries of this life, for I am disgusted with them; make an end of my conflicts, for the weight of these weapons is too much for my indolent hands; take this cross from me, for it weighs heavily upon me, and my tired shoulders can bear it no longer." This desire is mean and criminal. Others, clearly seeing that the world is only a place of passage, and that there is no true happiness to be enjoyed except in seeing and possessing God as He is, and that this pos-

session is indeed the crowning of the aspirations of our nature, cry out: "O angels of heaven! open wide your gates, open the eternal gates, and let us in!" But this they say without remembering their unworthiness, without stopping to inquire whether they are innocent in action and pure of heart, whether they are strong and valiant in fight, or whether they have acquired the virtues which make of man a king of glory. Their desire is interested, rash, presumptuous.

Listen, Christian! The desire of those who are in haste to disarm the enemy, to purify themselves, to acquire merit, to consummate the work of their perfection in order to hear all the sooner the call of their Well-Beloved, so that they may never more offend Him, and that they may love Him more intimately and be able to sing His glory more worthily by an unfailing and unending song of praise—behold what a good desire is! Cherish it in your heart, and unite it with the most pure aspirations of the Blessed Mary.

XV.

THE CORONATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—MARY IS QUEEN.

TO crown a work is to give the last touch to its perfection. In this sense Mary, the masterpiece of divine omnipotence and goodness, is crowned in heaven by Her Son. Jesus completes the virtues of His Most Holy Mother, tears away the veil under which the lustre of Her privileges was hidden, and reinvests Her immaculate body with light and immortality.

To crown any one is to reward his merits. In this sense Mary is crowned in heaven by the sovereign Remunerator; for to every thought of Hers, to each of Her desires, to every one of Her actions corresponds a degree of eternal glory which raises Her above any glorified creature.

Finally, to crown any one is to invest him with supreme honor and power. In this sense Mary is crowned in heaven by the eternal King of ages. Jesus places Her on His right hand, invites the whole heavenly court around Her throne, and proclaims Her Queen of angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all saints.

"Queen of angels": She is their Queen, not by the rights of nature, but by the rights of

grace. She has had the distinguished privilege of possessing the greatest created purity in a body borrowed from the blood of sinners, and of giving birth to the King of angels and archangels.

"Queen of patriarchs": She is Queen of the patriarchs, because through Her they have obtained the object of their desires. It was the fruit of Her chaste womb that healed their pious languishings and delivered them from the dark prisons in which they waited for glory and happiness.

"Queen of prophets": She is prophecy itself, for She gave to the world the promised reality. The Messias, whose portrait was perfectly drawn many years before His coming by men inspired of God, was formed of Her flesh and blood.

"Queen of apostles": for by Her prayers they obtained, along with the Spirit of God, the gift of the divine word. Her sweet and mysterious influence anticipates them in the souls they convert to God.

"Queen of martyrs": was She not associated in the sufferings of Her Son? Did She not suffer in Her Mother's heart everything that the martyrs of the faith suffered in their bodies?

"Queen of confessors": Her perfect life is a perfect model of the sublime virtues they have practised and by which they have attained the glory of heaven.

"Queen of virgins": in Her purity she excels them all. And along with the honor of

virginity She possessed that which was permitted to no other virgin to possess—the joys of maternity.

"Queen of all saints": to Her most powerful intercession they are all indebted for the grace of perseverance which opened to them the gates of heaven.

O admirable Queen! in what part of the heavenly kingdom shall we find ourselves one day? We know nothing of it; it is a secret in God's sacred keeping. In waiting for its divulgence behold us mourning and weeping in this vale of tears! But Thy throne is in our hearts, O Blessed Queen! Govern and direct Thy unhappy subjects. Our hope is in Thy sweet and merciful power, which leads and guides us. The enemies of our salvation will be powerless if Thou dost only cover us with Thy royal mantle. Our tottering steps will not stray from the way that leads to heaven, if Thou dost direct them. Hear, then, the prayers which all Christian humanity from the place of its exile addresses to Thee:

"We fly to Thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver from all dangers, O Thou ever glorious and blessed Virgin!"

"O Queen of Christians! deign to direct and sanctify this day our hearts and bodies according to the law of God, and enable us to fulfil all the works of His sacred precepts, so that here on earth and hereafter in heaven we may merit, by Thy intercession, eternal salvation."

THIRD SERIES.

FRUITS OF THE ROSARY.

Fruits of the Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries.

I.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—HUMILITY.

HAVING given ourselves to the contemplation of Jesus and Mary in the Rosary, let us now apply ourselves to gathering the fruits of these divine mysteries.

The Annunciation, in bringing to our minds the annihilation of the Word of God and the modest attitude of the Most Holy Virgin in presence of the homage given and the honors promised to Her, presents to our minds the virtue of humility as its practical fruit.

To make one's self little, to put one's self down even to the ground (*ad humum*), is the process energetically expressed by the word Humility. The desire to rise above all and to surpass all is the movement of the heart no less energetically expressed by the word Pride—*superbia*. Both in heaven and on earth pride has been the fatal principle of all ruin, of all corruption;

humility is the principle of salvation, the corner-stone of our perfection. By Her purity Mary was pleasing to God; by Her humility she attracted the uncreated Word to Her chaste womb. The Word offered Himself from all eternity to His Father for love of us; but it was by humbling Himself He commenced effectually the work of our salvation. Mary is the most beautiful of creatures; but She teaches us Herself that humility is the cause of Her greatness: "For it was because He regarded the humility of His handmaid" that She became the Mother of God. "Jesus is crowned with glory and honor, and invested with royal power over all the works of God"; but it is because "God has made Him a little less than the angels" (Psalm viii.)

This is the order and design of Eternal Wisdom. "God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble" (James iv. 6). And in the Magnificat the Blessed Virgin again says: "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart; He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and He hath exalted the humble." It was indeed well-pleasing to this great God to employ His omnipotence about our nothingness. Now, humility makes us draw near to nothingness; it creates in the human soul a mysterious emptiness which the divine goodness hastens to fill.

Nothing is more agreeable to God than this virtue; nothing more amiable among men. The humble man, thinking himself the least of all, envies no one and puts himself at the ser-

vice of all. The humble man, in ignoring himself, makes little of no one, restrains no one in his rights, clashes with no one, bears umbrage to no one. The humble man, casting a discreet veil over his virtues and merits, does not hold them out as a lesson for any one ; but, just because he hides them, they are sought for that their saving perfume may be inhaled. The humble man is sweet of heart, imitating herein the life of Him who invited all "to learn of Him, because He was meek and humble of heart." Behold what humility is !

What relation do we bear to this fundamental virtue of the Christian life ? Perhaps we have not reached its first degree, which consists in the sincere conviction that everything we possess of good comes to us from God. If we miserably puff up ourselves so as to be unwilling to see anything above ourselves, what vanity ! How many secret glances of delight we cast upon our little perfections ! How many agreeable excuses are made for our imperfections and faults ! How many deceptive and false comparisons we make ! What unjust preferences we entertain ! What ridiculous admiration we give way to ! With how many interior adulations we delight ourselves ! Finally, how many reasons do we give to God to withdraw Himself from us !

Let us enter into ourselves and beg of Jesus and Mary to put us on the pathway of true humility.

To refer to God and give Him homage for all the good in us is the first step in this pathway.

Not to take to heart the comparisons which our self-love turns to our advantage; not to be disturbed in regard to the gifts possessed by others, and ever to put ourselves tranquilly in our own place—this is the second step.

To be well acquainted with ourselves by self-examination, and, when we shall have discovered all our faults and all the germs of iniquity that lie hid in our corrupt nature, to esteem ourselves as the last of men—this is the third step.

Still advancing, and, knowing that we are the last of men, to believe sincerely that we are worthy of contempt—this is the fourth step.

From the sentiment of our unworthiness let us pass to its realization in action. Let us receive contempt with patience. Behold the fifth step. Let us not bargain about contempt, but rather let us desire it, go to meet it, and seek in it our purest joy. This is the sixth step.

A supreme effort is this: If God loads us with the favors only accorded to holy souls, and we only regard our corruption and nothingness; if we are confounded with the immensity of His goodness, as He forgot Himself in deigning to look upon us—this is the perfection of humility.

If we are thus humble it is well. The foundation of the spiritual life is laid. On its depth depends its solidity. The deeper we sink it the higher and more magnificent will be the edifice that God's grace will build in our souls.

II.

THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—FRATERNAL CHARITY.

IT is charity that speaks to the heart of Mary and brings Her across the difficult mountain country to visit Her cousin Elizabeth. Our holy Mother thus puts in practice beforehand the divine Gospel precept upon which Jesus will insist so much in His mortal life: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John xiii.)

After the supreme command to love God above all things, the love of our neighbor takes the next highest place in the Christian life. Our Blessed Saviour says "it is like the first." Both loves are so closely connected, support one another so well, work so harmoniously, that we cannot possess the one without the other. Without the love of God there is no fraternal charity; without fraternal charity there is no love of God.

Is there no room to doubt of the union of these two precepts in our actual relations with ourselves and the world? What egotism in poor human hearts! What egotism even in Christian hearts! We love ourselves extremely well; and, for the most part, that which appears to be the evidence of affection is only a cloak under which we hide the workings of our own pleasure or advantage.

Let us seek an example of true charity in the mystery now under consideration. In our visits and social relations with our neighbors we ought, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin, never to bring with us anything but timely assistance, good counsel, edification, and the grace of God.

More frequently, or—will I say it?—mostly always, our visits are those of interest, in which we seek to treat of something profitable to ourselves: visits of vanity, in which we wish to display our good looks or finery of dress; visits of curiosity, in which we busy ourselves to see and to hear many things that we might as well, and even ought to, let alone; visits of idleness, in which we endeavor to kill time which solitude makes too heavy on our hands; visits of malice, in which we devour with much relish the reputation of our neighbor; visits of sensuality, in which our senses are fed upon gross pleasures and our hearts upon familiarities more than doubtful. To entertain ourselves with our brethren on the principles of pure charity is rare indeed.

If we love, it is often blindly and inconsiderately. Natural advantages are more in our eyes than those of grace; charms of body and mental endowments attract us more commonly than splendor of virtue; we are more given to what pleases us than to what deserves our pleasure; we are less taken with what is useful than with what flatters us. In brief, instead of seeking in our neighbor God alone as the supreme object of our love, it is to ourselves we really

direct our attention as to the definitive object of our affections. Hence come antipathies and repugnances without any reasonable motive; hence also unjust preferences, undeserved benevolence, and generosity without the least merit before God.

Christian, learn from the Apostle of the Gentiles what fraternal charity ought to be:

It never looks after its own advantages: "Charity seeketh not its own" (1 Cor. xiii.)

It is not ambitious of honors or of the esteem of men: "Charity is not ambitious."

It bears patiently the imperfections, faults, and defects of others. Nothing can break its love: "Charity is patient."

It is unwilling even to think evil, so great is its dread of the violent impulses which disturb the peaceful tenor of its honest affections: "Charity thinketh no evil; is not provoked to anger."

Far from being saddened in view of the talents, good qualities, or good fortune of others, it rejoices in them, as if everything great, good, or happy within its sphere belonged to itself: "Charity envieth not."

It always seeks directly the true objects of Christian love: "Charity dealeth not perversely."

It has pity on sinners and expands its joy upon the just in whose souls the image of God shines forth in all its splendor: "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth."

It is kind, sweet, forward to oblige, compas-

sionate ; it spends itself, it is prodigal of good, more especially of spiritual good. It is replete with consolation, encouragement, good counsel, holy doctrine, and the aroma of virtue: "Charity is kind."

Oh, beautiful virtue ! Let us ask it of Jesus and Mary, and beg them to penetrate us with it and fix it indelibly in our souls.

III.

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR IN BETHLEHEM —DETACHMENT.

THE soul and heart are regulated by humility and charity. The next step to be taken in the way of perfection is to remove the obstacles that lie in that royal road. These are principally temporal goods, corruption of the senses, and self-will. To this effect we find three virtues successively proposed to us in the last three Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary—namely, detachment, purity, and obedience.

Let us go to the crib of Bethlehem and give ear to its teaching. Jesus is born in a stable, is laid upon a little straw, is poorly covered by scanty swaddling clothes. The heart of His Mother is wrung with grief because She has not for Him even what the poorest mothers ordinarily have. Bear in mind, dear Christian, that it is not fatality or the caprice of fortune that imposed on the Infant Jesus this great misery; He voluntarily took it upon Himself. Master of all things, He could have been born, like earthly kings, in a grand palace decorated with the richest tapestry; He could have surrounded Himself with servants ready to move at his beck; He might have been provided abundantly, even luxuriously, with everything

necessary, useful, or agreeable. He preferred to be despoiled of all to teach us to despoil ourselves.

The crib is the first pulpit of the Christian teacher. Listen, it says to us, listen, O Christian! and learn that the goods of this world are not made for you; they are brittle and uncertain; they are without honor; they are burdensome and dangerous!

To-day you possess them, but to-morrow capricious fortune may snatch them from your hands. And even when you have taken every precaution to hold them till the last moment of your life, the hour will come at length when you will be separated from them for ever and present yourself before the tribunal of God empty-handed!

You possess them, but of what value are they to your heart and soul? May not a man be the most ignorant, the most silly, the most ridiculous, and the most contemptible of men, and yet have money in abundance? Can grace and virtue, the only treasures that are never lost, be bought with gold?

You possess them; but how many anxieties, cares, troubles, plans, labors, unquiet desires, how many inconveniences to increase them or preserve them as you received them, weigh down your soul and body!

You possess them; but you should know that they have a fatal power of fascinating you and of engendering in your heart a mad love which dries the sacred sources of compassion, petrifies the heart and makes it hard and un-

feeling to the poor. Riches produce an insatiable thirst for more; criminal desires also which make a man ready for shameless injustice. They beget a spirit of vain ostentation, which in turn produces extravagant and scandalous luxury. Riches multiply temptations, and open to the human soul all the avenues of corruption.

This is the reason why our divine Master chose to be born in poverty, want, and misery; this is why the saints, after His example, have generally stripped themselves of all worldly goods.

In presence of the crib let us detach ourselves from all worldly and sensual desires.

If we possess nothing, let us not envy those who are rich. Let us not give to the world the ridiculous and wretched spectacle of those poor for whom God has prepared and made easy the road to perfection and salvation, yet who encumber themselves with restless and feverish desires.

If we possess something let us resolutely detach our hearts. Let us be of the number of those of whom our Blessed Saviour speaks: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Let us possess riches only to carry out good and noble works, representing herein the providence of God towards the poor. Let us endeavor to open for ourselves an avenue to the hearts and souls of the wretched who murmur against their hard lot; thus we may become to them pioneers of God's truth and grace and make for ourselves friends in heaven.

If we are detached in this manner we will see, without the least regret, the approach of our supreme and final deprivation; we will turn the vulgar and precarious goods of this world into the eternal goods of heaven; we will live tranquilly, sweetly abandoning ourselves to the holy will of God; we will keep steadily in the path of perfection, our hearts being closed against the seduction of riches; then will we have a true claim upon the caresses and benevolence of Jesus, the King of all the poor.

IV.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—PURITY.

IN obeying the Mosaic law which imposed upon Her the ceremony of purification, to which She was not obliged—for She had conceived without sin and was delivered without stain to Her virginity—Mary teaches us that we ought to watch with jealous care over the perfect integrity of body and soul, and proposes to us as the fruit of this mystery the holy virtue of purity.

Purity is an angelic virtue, a life-giving virtue, a lightsome virtue, a generous virtue, a virtue privileged of God.

An angelic virtue: It enables us to live in the corruptible flesh as the angels live in heaven. Whilst impurity brings us down to the likeness of brute beasts, chastity raises us to the condition of the angelic life, with this advantage of the man above the angel, that the purity of man is the fruit of combats delivered and of victories gained over the flesh, which tends to oppress the spirit.

A life-giving virtue: Purity reaches the very sources of existence and preserves a long time our fragile lives, like the oil of a lamp which preserves the flickering light until the time comes to extinguish it. But the vice of im-

purity exhausts and destroys in a short time the most prosperous and well-endowed lives.

It is a lightsome virtue: Purity disengages and simplifies the mind and prepares it to bring to perfection intellectual operations. So says St. Thomas of Aquin. And as pure and limpid waters preserve in all their fulness the images they reflect, so likewise does the pure soul preserve a luminous representation of eternal principles. Science unfolds to it and engraves upon it the sovereign intelligence, which is God. As we read in the book of Wisdom: "Incorruption draws us near to the incorruptible God." Christ, our Lord, has promised to this virtue a vision of the divine mysteries: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." In effect the chaste soul sees God everywhere, not only in the truths of faith which reveal to us the mysteries of His life, but also in the open book of the universe in which His perfections are written. Whilst some pass by the most ravishing scenes of nature carelessly and unconsciously, and others feed upon their beauty with selfish eagerness, the chaste soul delays, contemplates, admires the surrounding grandeur, and silently passes from the creature to its Creator who has prepared it all; and the song of praise commenced in the beauties of the earth, in the hearing of the pure soul, ascends to heaven to be lost in its depths. On the contrary, impurity, in imparting to the spirit much of the animal nature, drags it down from the native height of its conceptions to the shadows of a troubled

flesh, and blinds it to such an extent that it cannot see God, even where His presence is most manifest.

Purity is a generous virtue : It purifies love, dilates the heart, and imparts to it the spirit of sacrifice and immolation, in which the greatest works of charity, both temporal and spiritual, have their origin, at the head of which we always find souls that shine brightly in the purity of their devotedness. Impurity, on the other hand, returns and directs all its extravagances of sentiment towards the miserable *me* which gives nothing except for its own enjoyment.

Finally, purity is a privileged virtue of God : To virgin souls He accords His greatest favors. It was a virgin He made choice of to be the Mother of His Son ; it was on the bosom of the virgin apostle Jesus reposed at His Last Supper ; to the same apostle He confided the care of His holy Mother ; we read in the Apocalypse that in heaven it is virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and who sing a new canticle which no one else can sing. Impurity, on the contrary, renders a man abominable in the eyes of God—abominable even to the point of disgust—and made Him say in the book of Genesis that "it repented Him to have made man."

Purity is, then, one of the most charming and amiable of virtues ; but let us be on our guard: it is also the most frequently attacked, the most sensitive, and the most delicate of virtues. The flesh is its enemy and conspires incessantly against it ; and the seductions of the world,

too often in league with the appetites of the flesh, expose us constantly to the danger of losing it. Even within the fortress of a body never stained with its defilement it may receive mortal stabs. A thought, a desire, one of those reveries of the soul in which the imagination feeds itself with dangerous images, is sufficient to tarnish its beauty and to quench its light.

Let us be careful! We must preserve our purity by a constant vigilance over the senses, always open windows through which death rushes in; by mortification, which weakens concupiscence; by prayer, which secures to us God's assistance; by meditation, which gives birth to holy thoughts and heavenly desires; by the sacraments, which fortify the spirit against the flesh and are the seed of virginity; by devotion to Mary, Virgin most pure, the natural protectress of chastity.

If we have had the misfortune to have lost this precious virtue, let us purify ourselves by repentance and salutary austerity, even to that extent that the shadow of our past falls may give more éclat to our purity now reconquered for ever.

V.

THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE—OBEDIENCE.

WHEN the Virgin Mother found Her Child in the temple She said to Him: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Jesus answered: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about the things that are My Father's?" And the Gospel adds: "He went down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Luke ii. 48, etc.) But before this Mary had shown Her submission. The words of Jesus had sunk deeply into Her heart; She carefully kept them in mind and constantly meditated on them.

Therefore both Jesus and Mary speak to us in this mystery one word: "Obey."

To obey is to submit one's own will to the will of a superior. Of all obstacles to Christian perfection one's own will is the most dangerous, because it is surely the most persistent. By unforeseen accidents we may be deprived of all our earthly goods, and make a virtue of necessity by resigning ourselves to poverty; the ardor of the senses may grow cold with age or sickness, but our will remains always; and it is nearly the same thing that it should not exist at all as to deny or renounce itself. This re-

nunciation is difficult, yes, almost cruel, for our will is, of all things we possess, that to which we most strongly cling. More than anything else we possess it marks, defines, and tends to realize our personality.

It is also that which God values more than all other goods, and He esteems the sacrifice of it as more precious than all others. "Obedience is better than victims," He tells us by His prophet.

Besides being agreeable to God, obedience is supremely advantageous to ourselves, for it merits the particular favors of those to whom it is due; it secures to us a profound peace by relieving us of responsibility in many circumstances wherein our own will might lead us astray.

The religious person in particular who wishes to please God and prepare for himself the road of perfection immolates by vow his own will and with it all his goods. In certain religious orders the formula of profession contains only the vow of obedience. This grand and royal vow carries with it to the altar upon which the religious offers himself the pleasures of the world and the allurements of flesh and blood.

God does not demand of all such a total renunciation, but He imposes upon all the obligation of obedience. It is the necessary condition of all order. Suppress obedience and you will at once inaugurate the reign of caprice and folly. Then all society, divine and human, would become impossible. Alas! we know it too well. It is the spirit of independence and

revolt that troubles at present the family, the state, and the church itself.

Not less but rather more imperiously than the voice of God do we hear the voice of revolution and disorder say to us: "You must obey."

But let us examine what should be the qualities of our obedience.

It should be supernatural and noble; that is to say, it should rise to the principle of all authority. In submitting our will we should carefully avoid motives of interest, natural affection, effeminacy, baseness, or sloth. Man, how great soever he may be, has no inherent right to the admirable sacrifice implied by obedience. If he aims at ruling over the will of others solely to gratify the instincts of commanding them, he deserves only the contempt that may result in scornful resistance. He who has real self-respect will not submit himself except to God or for His sake.

We owe obedience to our parents and to our temporal and spiritual superiors when they command what is just. Then it is God that speaks, and it is Him we obey. We should be careful while obeying men to be ever at the service of our Father in heaven. "Did you not know," said the child Jesus, "that I should be engaged in My Father's affairs?"

From the moment that the will of God is expressed by those who represent Him let no proud murmurs be heard or critical judgments; for our obedience should be *humble.*

Let no mental reservations or pretences mar

the effect of our obedience, which should be *sincere.*

Let us not bring into our obedience a choice between what is agreeable and what is not. It must be *generous.* Let there be no hesitation or delays. Our obedience should be *prompt.* It should be *cheerful,* avoiding all complaints and excuses.

Taken all in all, it is doubtless hard to obey perfectly, so many passions circumvent the will, and impede its free oblation. But let us lovingly take the hand of Jesus and Mary: they will bring us along with them in the road of perfect submission; and, to make us walk the more steadily, they will induce us to sing with joyful hearts the victories of obedience. "The obedient man will speak of victories" (Prov. xx.)

The Dolorous Mysteries.

VI.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN—HATRED OF SIN.

"PREPARE ye the way of the Lord" is the invitation given to contemplate the joyful mysteries. "Destroy the empire of sin and follow in the blood-stained footsteps of your Saviour." This is the invitation to contemplate the sorrowful mysteries. The first fruit proposed to us in the agony in the garden of Gethsemani is hatred of sin.

Jesus has taken upon Himself a frightful responsibility. He, who was innocence and purity itself, is become in the eyes of His Father the living embodiment of sin. "Him who knew no sin He hath *made sin* for us" (2 Cor. v.) And thus has He been bruised without pity by the anger of God. "He was bruised for our iniquities."

Behold, Christian soul, in what state He presents Himself to you in the garden of Gethsemani! Feeble, languid, bent down to the earth, covered with a sweat of blood! Why these sorrowful complaints, this mysterious fear, this profound disgust, this sudden faint-

ness that brings Him to the gates of death? Alas! He sees sin; He is in dread of it; He feels Himself penetrated with sin; God shows Him all the frightful evils He will endure for sin.

Is not sin, then, a most shocking evil, since the Heavenly Father chastises so pitilessly His only Son, who has made Himself responsible for its atonement? Yes. It is the supreme evil; it is an evil that stands alone in its deformity; to speak truly, there is no real evil but sin.

The infirmities and deficiencies of nature insult none of the divine perfections; this insults them all. It insults the majesty which it contemns, the goodness which it abuses, the wisdom whose designs it opposes, the omnipotence whose yoke it would throw off, the justice which it sets at naught. If it were in the power of sin God would cease to be, for, as far as it can, it destroys Him. It substitutes in place of the supreme good an inferior good, towards which it directs all the aspirations of the human soul; it strives to make the infirm reason and dependent will of the creature prevail against the infinite wisdom and sovereign power of the Creator. Unable to pull down the great God from His throne, it imposes upon Him the terrible necessity of opening for its punishment the eternal abyss, in which He, so good, so sweet, so clement, will be constrained to chastise it without pity and without respite for ever.

Sin, the enemy of God, is no less the enemy of man. It debases his reason; it forms perverse habits which enchain his liberty; it dries

up the sources of the divine life which was added to his nature to raise it to the summit of its eternal destiny ; it nullifies the merits of the past ; it withers the good works of the present ; it cheats its miserable dupe, to whom it promises happiness in exchange for his rebellion ; in a word, it drags us down from the sublime condition in which, without vanity, we might call ourselves divine beings, to the condition of the brutes whose gross nature we consent to share. Hence the Psalmist has truly said : "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand ; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them" (xlviii.) Nay, more, the beast, by its instinct, acts the part which it can and ought to act ; but this cannot be said of the sinner.

Sin being so great an evil, how comes it that such a vast multitude become guilty of it with so much facility and bear its yoke so lightly ? The causes are ignorance, forgetfulness, blindness. But is the Christian, enveloped in so much light, often recalled to his duty, even at the moment in which he examines his conscience to confess his faults before God, indifferent, cold, or insensible ? Why do I doubt the sincerity of *his* contrition ? A servile fear, a shame entirely human, a paltry uneasiness, a movement of the will merely of routine—behold what I see in many a soul instead of earnest regret, generous indignation against sin, loving protestations to be true henceforth to God, and strong resolutions by which hatred of sin is best shown.

Christian soul, go to Gethsemani, and, throwing yourself at the feet of your agonizing Saviour, learn to hate sin as it deserves. Forget, if you can, the pain it has brought on you, the shame it has caused. Think only of the inestimable benefits of which it has deprived you : think of the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost, the peace of heart, the consolations of Heaven, the fruit of your good works, the supernatural resources of the soul, the rightful claim to an eternal inheritance, the spiritual adoption by which you have become in Jesus Christ a true child of God ; think of the blessed charity which enables you to say to God : My Friend ! my Father ! Nay, more, forget your own misfortunes in order to see only the infinite goodness of an offended God. He is the essential good, worthy of all love ; you have abused His gifts ; you have turned your back upon Him to run after lying goods. O miserable soul ! speak to Him with a contrite and humble heart. O Father, so good, so amiable, so worthy of my love, it is I, and not Thy dear Son, that offended ; it is I that ought to be chastised ; it is I that ought to die of grief. Soften my hard heart ; lacerate it with bitter regret ; crush it with the weight of Thy anger ; fill it with horror of all that in which it has offended Thee, and make it more an enemy of sin than sin has been its enemy.

VII.

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR—MORTIFICATION OF THE SENSES.

WHEN we consider the wounds opened by the cruel scourging in the sacred body of our dear Saviour, they seem to us like so many sadly eloquent mouths which say to us: "Mortify your senses."

Literally, "mortify" means to cause anything to die; and why should I cause my senses to die? Are they not the servants of the soul and the necessary instruments of the immaterial life? Open to the world outside of me, they receive the images which the activity of my mind unconsciously transforms, and by the aid of which it reaches ideas and even eternal principles. The sublime harmony of God's works penetrates through the senses even to the inner sanctuary of the soul, where the divine perfections are freely displayed, causing themselves to be known, admired, loved, adored, and blessed. When any of the senses is wanting to me my soul is, in a certain degree, mutilated; in this case there is always some work of God that I either know not at all or know imperfectly, some operation of the intellectual and moral life which I can perform only by halves.

Hence I ask again, Why mortify my senses, why cause them to die ?

In real truth, we would owe them deep respect and honorable treatment if they were always faithful servants ; but sin has perverted them. "Death has entered by my windows," says the prophet Jeremias ; and these windows are my senses.

The seductive images which awaken dangerous appetites in my flesh, the false brilliancy of objects which excite covetous desires, the endearing words which soothe my heart and steal away its affections, the impassioned discourses which violently excite and then deprave me, the perfumes which inebriate me and the gross delights in which I forget myself—all these enter by the senses. The servants of the soul are become the instruments of sin. How many faults, O God ! are committed by the senses. Thou hast good reason to pronounce severe judgments upon them ! "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it away; if thy right hand is dangerous to thy soul, cut it off and cast it from thee." And St. Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, tells us "to mortify our members." And in his epistle to the Romans (chapter viii.) he says : "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die ; but if, by the Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."

My God, I wish to live ; and, in order to live, I wish to mortify my senses. I do not wish to destroy them absolutely, for they may be of service to my soul and instruments of my perfection; but to cause the death of everything

in them that revolts against the spirit: rash impetuosity, restless investigations, evil delights, culpable complaisances—all this is what I wish.

To this effect I have need of constant watchfulness and unrelenting purpose. Whatever else may happen, I desire to save my soul from corruption.

Therefore I will say to my eyes: You shall not see; to my ears: You shall not hear; to the sense of smell: You shall not breathe; to my mouth: You shall not taste; to my hands and to all the members of my body: You shall touch neither images, nor forms, nor reports, nor discourses, nor perfumes, nor dishes, nor any other exterior thing which you desire earnestly to the detriment of my soul. Touch not its life; I forbid you to bring death in upon me.

But if my senses will not obey this command, whether through surprise, negligence, or malice, I will most severely chastise their disobedience. After the example of the saints I will arm myself with an avenging discipline; I will beat down my flesh; I will make this untamed rebel tremble with fear under the blows of my scourging; I will teach it to submit. Every fault shall receive a punishment proportioned to its gravity, and then I will cry out with the Psalmist: "Thy rod and Thy staff, O Lord! have been my comforters" (Psalm xxii.)

VIII.

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS—MORTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT.

IN this mystery the ignominy and suffering of Jesus reached His sacred Head.

Injured, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, He invites us to extend our mortification to the very head and throne of our nature—that is to say, the incorruptible spirit in which original grace had planted so many perfections, and into which original sin brought so many disorders.

How, then, am I to mortify my spirit? Certainly I cannot kill an immortal substance—that is impossible; I must not cause the death of its noble and pure aspirations towards the supreme good—this would be criminal; but I must put down every movement that is contrary to these aspirations.

There are two human creatures in us, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 47, etc.: "The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man from heaven, heavenly. Such as *is* the earthly, such also *are* the earthly; and such as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly. Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us also bear the image of the heavenly." That is to say, let the image of the heavenly man in us efface the image of the

earthly man. This cannot be entirely completed until the glorious day of the resurrection. But, in waiting for that blessed day, we should endeavor to make the heavenly creature live in us, and condemn to death the creature of earth.

We strike this latter creature in its more material or more gross part when we mortify the senses; we reach it in its more subtile part when we mortify the spirit. Without this mortification of spirit the most severe and even bloody austerities are merely useless demonstrations, and even dangerous, inasmuch as they sometimes fill us with a false security. Military men tell us that it is not enough to secure the outposts of a fortification, but it is also necessary to restrain the rash ardor of the defenders within the walls and prevent their disastrous sallies, by means of which the enemy might get in.

Therefore let us keep the spirit in due bounds by mortification. Let the word be:

Death to those wandering thoughts and fickle desires which divide and scatter the powers of the soul and prevent us from being duly recollected before God.

Death to this mad eagerness with which we pursue the honor, glory, esteem, and consideration of men, as if these frivolous rewards could sufficiently compensate our talents, virtues, or merits.

Death to that anxiety which forces us to manifest ourselves to the world, to be or to appear something on the theatre of a day on

which the interests and passions of the world are never at rest.

Death to that ill-directed thirst after knowledge which makes us forget the safe boundary line at which faith says to reason: "Halt! Beyond this line man should bring nothing but timid respect and silent admiration."

Death to those independent ideas which tend to withdraw our will from the just direction of the most venerable and best-founded authorities.

Death to those desires of domination which cause our imperious, exacting, and capricious will to weigh grievously upon our inferiors and even upon our equals.

Death to that overshadowing self-love which takes offence at everything; to that susceptibility ever in a flutter and ever unable and unwilling to bear the least contradiction.

Death to those petty jealousies, antipathies, and rancors which disturb peace and charity.

Death to those too ardent and tender affections which fill the heart with a created object before which the soul loses itself instead of being raised to God.

Death to all affections which absorb our attention and monopolize our hearts, as if there was nothing better for our love.

Death even to the sensible sweets and joys of devotion, in which the soul rests as if it were the terminus of its journey, whereas it should remember that all perfect souls have to pass through the desert before they arrive at the land of promise.

Courage! Courage! Let us force into our souls the thorns of spiritual mortification. With the aid of Jesus and Mary let us put to death the earthly man within us, in order that the celestial man may live in recollection, simplicity, submission, humility, benevolence, devotion, holy love, and pious abandonment. Let the word be: For God, through God, in God.

IX.

THE CARRIAGE OF THE CROSS—PATIENCE.

"IF any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." These are the words of our Blessed Saviour, recorded by St. Matthew (chap. xvi. 24).

To bear our cross with patience after the example of the meek Lamb, who suffered Himself to be led to punishment without a word of complaint, is our duty as Christians. And we have no need of seeking occasions to exercise our patience. The cross is sure to come to us from all sides. "Turn thyself above thee or below thee, outside of thee or within thee, and everywhere thou shalt find the cross" ("Following of Christ," book ii. 12).

"Above us" it is the hand of God that hangs over us and presses us, whether it is to satisfy His justice, or to prove our love, or to fortify us against the enchantment of the false pleasures of the world, or to give our lives the seal and sign of Christian vocation and perfection.

"Below us" it is the demon, whose undying hatred pursues us without respite, and who is industrious to torment us. It is the demon that stimulates our senses, disturbs our imagination, excites our passions, disquiets our consciences, and endeavors to drive us to scrupulosity, discouragement, and despair.

"Outside of us" it is the wicked who conspire against our repose and labor for nothing so much as to injure us; or it is the foolish, who, without intending it, offend our sense of propriety; it may be persons of ill-formed characters to whose asperities we have to submit; uncongenial natures which badly accord with ours; our dearest friends whom we see suffering; other friends who are incredulous, relatives without religion, an unfaithful spouse, wicked children, business troubles, the reverse of our fortunes, unsuccessful labors, the separation or death which makes vacant the fireside and crushes our hearts.

Within us it is the cross of sickness, inability to do what we honestly desire to do, the passions that worry us, imperfections which restrain us, defects which discourage us, sins which alarm us; and, if we are somewhat advanced in perfection, it is the grief of our exile, which increases in proportion to our love. What a cross, great God! what a cross! And do we bear it?

We are not, indeed, of the number of the rebellious who defile themselves by blasphemy, and make of the cross a cause of complaint against Providence, denying not only God's perfection but His existence, that they may be able to despise and attack at their pleasure the blind fatality to which they attribute all their evils. No, we belong not to them. But, alas! we are, for the most part, impatient. We murmur and complain; we show by our heart-breaking sighs that we wonder at ourselves for being so miserable. We even aggravate our sufferings

by disagreeable comparisons, taking into account only those who appear more prosperous and happy, without thinking of those who have more trials than ourselves. If we only dared to say it, which our deep faith forbids, we would almost say that God is not just, or that He would show more justice in less severity; if we dared say it, our idea would be that God is not good, or that He would be better if He relieved us of misfortunes and gave us instead a greater share of happiness. In all this we forget our sins, which deserve to be chastised; our vocation as Christians, which obliges us to the imitation of a crucified God; our perfection, which cannot be attained without sufferings, yet we are in haste to be free.

But Jesus has said: "You must take your cross." It is not a request or a counsel, but a command—so rigorous and irreformable that our salvation is bound up with its fulfilment. "Who taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 38).

Christians, understand it well and be convinced that the cross is unavoidable, and consequently ought to be borne in patience. If we must needs drag along with us the instrument of our punishment, let us at least do so in silence. And if we speak, let it be to confess with the good thief on the cross that we deserve it all, or lovingly to beg our dear Saviour and Master to pity our weakness and to temper the severity of His strokes by sending us some one of those consolations of which He knows the secret.

The words of the great apostle are encouraging:

"Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope" (Rom. v. 4). Purified from our sins by sorrow and trial, we will await the more peacefully the eternal days in which no suffering will be lost: "For our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). "Patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, deficient in nothing" (St. James i. 4).

X.

THE CRUCIFIXION—LOVE OF THE CROSS.

JESUS is not content to bear with admirable patience the cross on which we see Him expire. He had passionately desired it. In the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter twelfth, we read these significant words: "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how I am tormented with the desire of seeing it accomplished!"

Jesus crucified proposes to our hearts a strange love—a love that would be barbarous if it had not passed through a divine heart, or if this heart had not revealed to us its sublime benefits. It is nothing less than the love of the cross.

To love the cross! That is too much! cries out human nature. All that I can do is to accept it with resignation, to bear it with patience; but to love it! That is difficult indeed.

Nature, thou art deceived. Thou hast an innate horror of the cross; thou dost enter a protest with all thy power against the trials whose austere visit thou receivest every day, and without the grace of God it would be impossible for thee to accept even one of them. Be silent; we do not consult thee when there is question of our Christian perfection. In thee we are only weak and powerless; it is only by

God's grace we can be Christians, strong even to heroism.

Christ has made us His children ; Christ calls us to His standard and conducts us to the conquest of His eternal kingdom.

How admirable yet how terrible was the espousal of Christ with the hard and blood-stained wood of the cross ! The eternal God saw it, was moved by it, and blessed it. Never before was a marriage so effectually blessed. From it has sprung "a chosen people, a holy nation." This race, this people, is made up of ourselves. Children of Jesus crucified, we ought to be living images of our Father, as He is the living image of His eternal Father. Apart from the incommunicable personality, Jesus Christ, the divine Word, is all that His Father is : "I and the Father are one." Apart from the incommunicable divinity of Christ, who has begotten us, we ought to be all that He is : one thing with Him. He suffers, we ought also to suffer ; He was crucified, we ought to be crucified also ; He loved the cross, with Him we should also love it.

Soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must follow our Leader on the same line of march He marked out, pass through all that He passed through, in order to enter with Him into His kingdom. Now, He chose a hard and shocking road ; He kept it not only by voluntary and cheerful acceptance, by patient support of it, but also by an impassioned love of the cross.

O my Jesus ! notwithstanding the repugnances of nature, Thou hast found in the ranks

of regenerated humanity lovers of the cross. How noble they are! How earnestly they desire to resemble their divine Model! With what gladness they walk in His footsteps! Their good-will is sustained by so many graces that they would not live without painful trials. They demand them of God: "More! more! O Jesus, my Beloved! Either to suffer or to die. Still better: never to die, but always to suffer for Thee, if it be Thy good pleasure." If God proposes a recompense, they answer: "Lord, I wish for nothing but to suffer and be contemned for Thee."

Theirs is the triumph. Their immolated life is a never-ending canticle by which they celebrate the cross or die upon it every instant. Hear the devout author of the "Following of Christ": "In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection against thy enemies; in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the cross is the sum-total of all virtues; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity" (Book xii.) Hail, O cross! Hail, glory of the world! O sacred tree! press us within thy blood-stained arms and make us die of grief for love of Him who bore Thee!

My nature shudders at these strange words. I feel that without a very great grace I cannot take my place among the triumphant! O Jesus, my Master and my Model, give me this grace! O Mother of sorrows, Mother most chaste, most perfect lover of the cross, obtain for me this grace!

The Glorious Mysteries.

XI.

THE RESURRECTION—FAITH.

BY meditation on the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary we will now enter into a celestial field, in which we will proceed to gather its divine fruits: faith, hope, charity, union with God, and perseverance.

The Saviour is taken from the cross and laid in the grave. A large stone, upon which authority, restless and uneasy, attaches its seal, covers His mortal remains. All is there—doctrine, law, institutions, promises, examples, benefits, miracles. All is lost, without any hope of being recovered, if corruption shall convict of falsehood the Man who proclaimed Himself the herald of truth, the truth itself; and the apostle has well said: "Our faith is vain."

But at an hour long foreseen and long foretold the rocks tremble, the grave opens, Christ rises again from the dead. Doctrine, law, institutions, promises, miracles, benefits, all rise again with Him! Our faith is true.

The resurrection of our Saviour is, then, preeminently the mystery of faith. It roots in the

human soul that divine virtue which supports the whole edifice of the supernatural virtues.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it has for its object truths which our weak reason never could discover—truths which God conceals in the depths of His divine essence, and which no created nature could know if He had not revealed them. These truths are the eternal food of angels, and hence it may well be said, By faith we eat the bread of angels.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it has for its motive the infallible knowledge and supreme veracity of God who speaks, and who, by His word, protects the human mind against all error.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it does not rise spontaneously on the shallow shores of our intellectual nature. It is God that places its germs in our souls; it is God that watches over it and quickens its marvellous increase. To no purpose would the logic of facts and the power of reasoning press us to accept the truths of faith; convinced of the necessity of giving our assent to these truths, we are not, for that reason merely, true believers yet, except God gives us the gift of faith.

The divine virtue faith supports our hope as the foundation of a glorious edifice; faith shows us the supreme good to which our hearts ought sovereignly to attach themselves. It is the primary virtue; the virtue which necessarily takes the lead of all natural virtues, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi.)

But let us not deceive ourselves: the faith by which we please God, the faith upon which the Christian virtues are firmly founded, the faith which is to conduct us to the summit of the spiritual life, is not a cowardly faith which is disconcerted at the least contradiction; it is not a languishing faith which truths poorly learned and soon forgotten scarcely maintain; it is not a drowsy faith which allows the prejudices and maxims of the world to prevail in our lives; it is not a dumb faith, or a faith without life-giving heat, afraid of asserting or of expanding itself.

The faith which pleases God is a firm faith, which the tempests of incredulity cannot shake, which the poison of doubt cannot penetrate. It is the faith of those Christians of whom St. Paul speaks: "If so you continue grounded and fixed in the faith" (Col. i. 23). The faith which pleases God is a lively faith, which always desires to be enlightened and instructed, and which drinks in the sacred waters of truth, crying out: Still more! still more! The faith which pleases God is a sovereign faith, which regulates our every-day life and conforms it to the laws of the Gospel, the maxims of heaven, and the rules of perfection. The faith which pleases God is a generous faith, which asserts itself boldly, which undertakes valiant crusades against indifference, doubt, and incredulity, in public and in private, and, in the absence of eloquent discourses, strives to bring wandering and uncertain souls back again by prayer to the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ.

If such is our faith, we may rejoice in it. We are the Christians of whom St. Paul spoke: "My just man liveth by faith." Let us rejoice indeed, yet let us not rest at that, but rather say in the words of the Gospel: "Lord, do thou increase my faith" (St. Luke xvii.)

XII.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD INTO HEAVEN—HOPE.

JESUS CHRIST, in pointing out heaven to us in His glorious Ascension, awakens all the attention of our souls to the supreme object of Christian hope. This object is hidden from our carnal eyes; our weak reason is unable to discover it, but faith brings us into its sacred precincts. Herein we perceive the truth of the expression of St. Paul: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for; the demonstration [evidence] of things that appear not" (Heb. xi.)

Christian, listen to the language of faith: All on earth is vanity; and no created object in which our dreams of happiness may be centred can possibly fill the immense chasm of our desires. Human glory, riches, beauty, love, knowledge, virtue itself say to us: I am not the happiness for which God has placed in your soul a desire, to a certain degree, infinite; look beyond me. "Seek the things that are above." Above! Yes, it is to heaven you are tending. Be not deceived by the fleeting images that pass under your notice. Be grounded in hope. One day the thick veil which hides from you the secrets of the Divinity will be torn away by the bountiful and merciful hand of your Crea-

tor. You will pass from the region of darkness into the realms of light; for it is written in Holy Scripture: "In Thy light we will see the light itself" (Psalm xxxv.) And again in 1 Cor. xiii.: "We will see Him face to face; we will see Him as He is."

As He is! How wonderful! That is to say, we will see Him in His infinite essence, in the harmony of His admirable perfections, in the acts of His incomprehensible life, in the trinity of persons and unity of nature, in all things which comprise His knowledge and His power. You will be enraptured by so much beauty; you will feel yourself so environed by the infinite love, and yourself so penetrated with love and delight, that you will become like to the object of your felicity. "When He shall appear we will be like to Him" (1 John iii.) Your very body, only vile dust, worth almost nothing, will go to rejoin your soul. Less corruptible, more agile, more brilliant than the light of the proud stars which illuminate the firmament, it will take possession of purified space, a limitless paradise, in which ineffable joys await its coming. The contemplation and possession of God in a transfigured flesh—behold your happiness for ever and for ever!

But how can I hope to attain this sublime end? My weak and grovelling nature is chained to the earth. Be tranquil; you have heard your Saviour say to you before He ascended into heaven: "I go to prepare a place for you." True to His word, He shows to His divine Father His glorified wounds, and "He

ever lives to be our perpetual intercessor"; and His intercession causes torrents of His grace to flow upon those whom He has redeemed. Grace is, therefore, in our souls the pledge and the very germ of the glory of heaven.

In what, then, consists Christian hope? Firmly to await the vision and eternal possession of God, and to obtain it, to look for His grace; to look for it, since God has promised it and is faithful to His promises; to look for it and never be discouraged, notwithstanding the length of our exile on earth, or the weakness of nature in being exposed to all manner of infirmities and tribulations, or the terrible demands of the passions, or the tenacity of our failings; to look for it without ever despairing of the divine mercy, notwithstanding the number, enormity, and depth of our falls, or their monstrous ingratitude; to look for it without confiding presumptuously in our own strength or counting too much on the goodness of God, thereby to be emboldened in sin, nor expecting God to come to us at the last moment, when we have forgotten Him many years; to look for it, finally, by praying for grace and corresponding with grace. This is the meaning of Christian hope.

What a strange spectacle the world gives us in relation to Christian hope! See the vast throngs that rush eagerly and blindly after all manner of earthly goods, as if these were their only end. In beholding them who can think men were made for heaven? If we cannot

possibly bring them to a halt they will indeed deceive themselves. Let us not be moved or troubled by the scandal they give, but rather direct our attention to those who live here below conformably to their hopes. Let us see them despising generously the goods of the world, incessantly resisting the gross desires which bend the soul to the earth ; marching joyfully on the road of duty, receiving piously, preserving carefully, and ardently developing the graces which Heaven sends upon their souls. Let us listen to their languishing grief because of the length of their pilgrimage and the sorrows of their exile ; in them it is easy to see the future possessors of the divine essence, citizens of eternal mansions.

Let us take part in their canticle of praise, and with them sing: O Lord, Thou hast promised us a happier land ; our souls rejoice in Thy promise ! Give us Thy grace and we will go into Thy house. "I have rejoiced in the things spoken to me ; we will go into the house of the Lord."

XIII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST—CHARITY.

WHAT is this Spirit Jesus sends that makes the roof of the upper room tremble, and diffuses itself upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost? It is the same which in heaven produces the movement of infinite life and completes the divine family; it is the perfective force, the essential substance of the love of the Father and of the Son; it is charity itself. He comes to bring us charity, as we learn from the Apostle of the Gentiles: "The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). Faith and hope are great and splendid virtues, but "charity is greater than they."

"Without charity," says St. Thomas of Aquin, "the highest and most estimable goods are without union or cohesion; charity unites (*connectit*) them. Without charity all good things are fragile; charity gives them stability. Without charity goods of an inferior order tend to separation from the supreme good; charity elevates them, transforms them, and makes of all goods one only good. 'Above all things have charity,' says St. Paul; 'it is the bond of perfection'" (Col. iii.)

All that in which we make perfection consist

only brings us imperfectly and in a manner more or less near to the eternal type.

The possession of earthly goods, the exercise of command, makes us participate in the sovereign dominion of God ; intellectual culture in His infinite knowledge, moral virtues in His adorable sanctity. Faith gives us admission into His secrets and leads us on to His beatitude, but charity fixes us in Him and roots us in His love. "God is charity ; he who has charity abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv.) The day will come when the universe will be folded like a book ; its goods, its beauties, and its joys will slip from our hands ; science will be no more ; miracles will cease ; the prophecies will find emptiness under their feet ; faith will vanish in presence of the eternal revelations ; hope, having come to its object, will end in that object ; but charity will always remain. "Charity never faileth" (1 Cor. xiii.)

Above all things let us have charity. It is the greatest honor, the most perfect beauty, the most imperative yet winning of duties. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment" (Mark. xii.)

Is it thus we love God ? Admitting that we make pretensions to His love, does not the whole tenor of our lives give these pretensions a shameful and cruel contradiction ?

The object of true love is often thought of ; but we can hardly spare a few moments in our

daily occupation to raise our souls to God, the supreme object of all love. Many hours are spent in worldly and sometimes very frivolous engagements in which God is allowed no share. We hear people speak freely and frequently of those whom they love and of themselves, of their perfections and merits; but every conversation in which God or the affairs of God are brought in seems irrelevant or tiresome. We are too much inclined to treat of our own little interests and passions, and to expatiate upon trifles and illusions.

The will of those whom we love is obeyed with alacrity, but we reluctantly apply ourselves to the holy laws by which God's will is expressed, even when we do not put our own caprices or culpable desires above them.

We give ourselves totally to those we love; we are prepared to sacrifice for them our most precious goods, even life itself; but for God we make a very small place indeed in our paltry existence. Knowing our weakness, He refrains from exactions; but, supposing for His glory there was need of our blood or of our life—nay, even less than that, of our earthly affections, of our temporal goods, of our pleasures—would we have the courage to say to Him, Take them?

O my God! if it is true that I love thee, my love is yet a very poor thing. But have pity upon the little germ that Thou hast planted in my heart, and make it grow into that divine charity which Thou expectest of me, and with which the apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost. May the Holy Virgin, who em-

balmed the room in which they were assembled with the sweet perfume of Her virtues, and who, by the fervor of Her desires, brought down upon Her the Spirit of God, deign to obtain this grace for us.

XIV.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—UNION WITH GOD.

WE have seen the Blessed Mary before Her glorious Assumption languish with love of Her Son and aspire to a union with Him in heaven with all the powers of Her soul. This union had already commenced. The absence of Her Dearly-Beloved had made no void in the heart of our holy Mother. With the eyes of the soul She still beheld Him who had ascended into heaven ; She conversed mysteriously with Him ; She poured forth Her heart upon His Sacred Heart ; She was with Him, by Him, and in Him ; She was one with Him.

Union with God is the fruit of the virtues we have been gathering, especially of charity. This is the reason it is so profound, so intimate, so constant in holy souls ; so many and so great prodigies are seen in it that it can be ill-understood by the generality of men. Ecstasies, raptures, flights of the soul towards heaven, liquefactions, annihilations, mystical transformations—who is it that clearly understands all these ? Nevertheless the most humble and unaspiring souls are permitted to prepare themselves for at least timid and humble advances in this direction.

Why does not charity effect in the Christian

life that which human love effects in the natural life ?

When absence or death takes away from us those whom we love affectionate memory keeps them near us still. Their image, the moment it is recalled, comes before us in immaterial light, although we cannot see them with the eyes of the body. They look upon us, and we upon them ; they speak to us, and we to them ; we believe that we enjoy their endearments, and we lavish upon them the marks of our affection. Love realizes their presence.

Is it true, O my God ! that the love of our hearts is more forcible in uniting us to creatures than in uniting us with Thee ? True indeed Thou art a "hidden God" ; but the Christian soul, imbued with the great virtues of faith, hope, and charity, ought to rise to Thee and cling to Thee, not only sometimes, but always ; that is to say, it ought to live in Thy presence, pour forth its love to Thee, and be penetrated by Thee.

What a comfort, a joy, and a glory it would be to be able to say : The world is no longer anything to me ; I despise its goods and its caresses, its judgments and its persecutions ; I am united to God !

I am united to God ! Nothing now touches me, or pleases me, or troubles me, or affrights me. All the allurements of the world and all the furies of hell may conspire against me in vain. My pleasure and my trust is in God.

I am united to God ! I see Him in all things. Creatures adorned with a ray of

beauty reveal to me His infinite perfections. The miseries of my brethren recall to me the sorrows of His Son. In all that is against me I recognize His justice and adore it; in all that favors me I see and kiss His loving hand. I see Him everywhere, and He sees me. My thoughts, desires, and actions germinate and flourish under His benign and merciful care.

I am united to God! He speaks to my soul by those whom He has charged with my instruction and direction, and especially by the holy grace which revives in me the echo of His words. I listen to Him; He listens to me. I praise Him; I bless Him; I deliver myself up to His holy will. I give Him my joys, my sorrows, my consolations and trials, my glory and my humiliation, my leisure and my labors, my actions great and small, my spirit, my heart, my life. I am all His; He is all mine. "I live now, not I, but God my Saviour liveth in me."

I am united to God! He gives me an experimental knowledge of His goodness, His sweetness, His greatness, and the grandeur of His perfections. This knowledge has embraced my will; that embrace has produced joy; this joy has excited my desires; these desires have been rewarded with satiety; satiety has in turn caused gladness, and gladness unalterable sweetness; this sweetness brings repose, according to the word of the Lord in the mouth of the prophet: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest" (Isaias xxxii.)

I am united to God ! Behold what I ought to say ; but, alas ! my miserable life has scarcely more relation to God than the life of one estranged from Him. He does not withdraw Himself from me, but I withdraw myself from Him to wander among creatures. Pardon me, O my God ! and bring me back to Thee, and make me ever live by faith, hope, and charity in Thy blessed company until the striking of that happy hour in which I shall be so intimately united to Thee that nothing can separate us for ever.

XV.

THE CORONATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN—PERSEVERANCE.

"BE faithful unto death," says our Lord, "and I will give you the crown of life" (Apoc. ii.) It is this fidelity that God rewards in the Coronation of the Most Blessed Virgin. It is the mystery which speaks to us of perseverance. St. Thomas of Aquin tells us that "perseverance is the virtue by which the good that is in us endures until it is consummated." In all works truly great this virtue is necessary. True and solid success is only attainable by relentless labor which triumphs over all obstacles.

The wonder is to see the constancy and efforts expended on projects which those who engage in them hardly approve in their conscience. And how can we be inconstant or slothful when there is question of accomplishing the grand design of our sanctification and of perfecting in ourselves the work of grace?

Let us bear this in mind: the innocence and virtue of our past life cannot secure our eternal happiness in the future if we prove untrue to ourselves. "No one putting his hand to the plough and looking back is worthy of the kingdom of heaven" (Luke ix.) "He who persevereth to the end shall be saved"

(Matt. x.) To have participation in Christ is the condition of salvation. But we are partakers with Him only "when we hold the beginning of His substance firm unto the end" (Heb. iii.) To be virtuous to-day is good; but the virtues run as in a race, and only one is crowned—perseverance. Other virtues merit the crown, but perseverance alone receives it. When God will have us read at His tribunal the book of our lives, He will not stop us at the first page, but we must read it even to the last; *that* will be the page of life and benediction if we shall have persevered in good works, otherwise a page of malediction and of eternal death.

But why should we think so seriously of perseverance? How do we know but that it is, like predestination, a gratuitous gift of God? Let us not wander from the truth and run into the recklessness of those who, considering the divine decrees as mere fatalities, do not consider themselves obliged to make any effort, under the pretext that it is necessary to let the grace of God work of itself.

In answer we must bear in mind that perseverance is a gift truly, but a gift which can be, to a certain extent, the reward of our good-will and of our generous efforts. God allows Himself to be moved by the anxiety of a soul to receive and render fruitful the grace He imparts; for, as He tells us, "to him that hath it shall be given, and he shall abound" (Matt. xiii.) One grace, heartily cultivated by our correspondence with it, attracts another grace.

Thus a mysterious chain of divine gifts invisibly forms itself in our lives and links them at last in heaven. To this chain of divine gifts necessarily corresponds an uninterrupted succession of strong resolutions, which renew the impulse our souls receive conjointly from grace and from our good-will. Thus, says the Angelic Doctor, "perseverance depends on fortitude," which is another word for strong and lasting resolution. Philosophers tell us that we must have a firm and constant will to acquire any virtue; how much more so that which gives duration to them all!

I deceive myself. Properly speaking, we cannot acquire perseverance; for whatever may be the relationship of our correspondence with the renewal of graces, it depends on the good-will of God to give us this final grace. Not being able to make ourselves worthy of it, let us endeavor to obtain it by humble and fervent prayer. Jesus has said: "Ask, and you shall receive." Confiding in this promise, we make our wants known to Thee, O Blessed Jesus! and we beg this final grace of Thee through the intercession of our holy Mother. And, although the number of the persevering may be small indeed, we hope to be of that small number; for Thou wilt hear the prayer so often repeated in the Holy Rosary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of death."

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

OF

OUR HOLY FATHER POPE LEO XIII.

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ON

THE EFFICACY AND POWER OF THE ROSARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, AND ON THE PROPAGATION OF THIS DEVOTION.

GIVEN ON THE 1ST OF SEPTEMBER, 1883.

LEO, BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE, POPE,

TO THE

Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World in the grace and communion of the Apostolic See:

VENERABLE BRETHREN, HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION:

In virtue of the Supreme Apostolic office which we discharge, and considering the great difficulties of the present time, we are warned and well-nigh compelled to provide for the safety and defence of holy Church all the more earnestly according as the calamities which surround her are more grievous. While, therefore, we endeavor to preserve the rights of the

Church, and to obviate present and contingent dangers, we constantly seek for the help of Heaven—the sole means of effecting anything—that our care and labor may attain the end they seek. We deem it certain that there can be no surer and more effectual means to this end than by religion and piety to obtain the favor of the glorious and great Mother of God, the guardian of our peace and the administratrix of heavenly grace. For She is placed on the summit of power and glory in heaven to bestow the help of Her patronage on men who, through many labors and dangers, strive to reach that eternal abode. Now, therefore, that the anniversary of manifold and exceedingly great favors obtained by a Christian people through the devotion of the Holy Rosary is at hand, we desire that the same devotion be offered by the whole Catholic world with the greatest earnestness to the Blessed Virgin, that by Her intercession Her divine Son be moved in our favor and appeased in the evils now pressing upon us. And, therefore, we have determined, venerable brethren, to despatch to you these letters, that, informed of our design, your authority and zeal may excite your people to bring it to a happy issue.

It has always been the custom with Catholics in times of danger and trouble to fly for refuge to Mary, and to seek for peace in Her maternal goodness—showing that the Church has ever most justly put all her hope and trust in the Mother of God. And truly the Immaculate Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of God and

thereby associated with Him in the work of man's salvation, has a favor and a power with Her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained or ever can obtain. And, as it is Her greatest pleasure to assist and comfort those who seek Her, it cannot be doubted that She will deign and even be anxious to receive the aspirations of the universal Church.

This devotion to the august Queen of Heaven, so great and so hope-inspiring, has never appeared in such brilliancy as when the Church militant seemed to be imperilled by the violence of heresy in its widening progress, or by intolerable corruption of morals, or by the attacks of powerful enemies. Ancient and modern history, as well as the more sacred records of the Church, bear witness to the fact that public and private supplications have been addressed to the Mother of God, and mention also the help She imparted in return; they proclaim in like manner the peace and tranquillity She so often obtained from God. Hence the illustrious titles of "Help of Christians," "Consoler," "Mighty in War," "Victorious," and "Peace-Giver," accorded to Her in Christian annals. And principally among these may be counted that solemn title drawn from the "Rosary," by which its signal benefits to the entire Christian world have been consecrated for ever. None among you, venerable brethren, is ignorant of the great calamities the Church of God suffered from the attacks of the Albigensian heretics, offspring of the later sects of

Manicheans, who, towards the close of the twelfth century, filled southern France and other regions of the Latin race with their pestiferous errors. Through the terror of their arms they sought to found their domination by slaughter and ruin. Our merciful God, as you know, raised up against these direful enemies of His kingdom on earth a most holy man, the illustrious parent and founder of the Dominican order. Great in the integrity of his doctrine, in his example of virtue, and by his apostolic labors, he proceeded undauntedly to attack the enemies of the Catholic Church, not by the force of arms, but trusting wholly to that devotion which he was the first to institute under the name of the Holy Rosary, which was disseminated through the length and breadth of the earth by him and his pupils. Guided, in fact, by divine inspiration and grace, he foresaw that this devotion, like a most powerful warlike weapon, would be the means of putting the enemy to flight and of confounding their audacity and mad impiety. Such was, indeed, its result. Thanks to this new method of prayer—when adopted and properly carried out as instituted by the holy Father St. Dominic—piety, faith, and union began to return, and the projects and devices of the heretics to fall to pieces. Many wanderers also returned to the way of salvation, and the wrath of the impious was restrained by the arms of those Catholics who had determined to repel their violence.

The efficacy and power of this devotion was

also wondrously exhibited in the sixteenth century, when the vast forces of the Turks threatened to impose on nearly the whole of Europe the yoke of superstition and barbarism. At that time the Supreme Pontiff, St. Pius V., after arousing the sentiments of a common defence among all the Christian princes, strove, above all, with the greatest zeal, to obtain for Christendom the favor of the most powerful Mother of God. So noble an example offered to heaven and earth in those times rallied around him all the minds and hearts of the age. And thus Christ's faithful warriors, prepared to sacrifice their life and blood for the salvation of their faith and their country, proceeded undauntedly to meet their foe near the Gulf of Corinth, while those who were unable to take part formed a pious band of supplicants, who called on Mary, and unitedly saluted Her again and again in the words of the Rosary, imploring Her to grant the victory to their companions engaged in battle. Our Sovereign Lady did grant Her aid; for, in the naval battle by the Echinades Islands,* the Christian fleet gained a magnificent victory with no great loss to itself, in which the enemy were routed with great slaughter. And it was to preserve the memory of this great boon thus granted that the same Most Holy Pontiff desired that a feast in honor of Our Lady of Victories should celebrate the anniversary of so memorable a struggle, the feast which Gregory XIII. dedicated under the title of "The Holy Rosary." Simi-

* Sometimes called Lepanto.

larly important successes were in the last century gained over the Turks at Temeswar, in Pannonia, and at Corfu; and in both cases these engagements coincided with feasts of the Blessed Virgin and with the conclusion of public devotions of the Rosary. And this led our predecessor, Clement XI., in his gratitude to decree that the Blessed Mother of God should every year be especially honored in Her Rosary by the whole Church.

Since, therefore, it is clearly evident that this form of prayer is particularly pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, and that it is especially suitable as a means of defence for the Church and all Christians, it is in no way wonderful that several others of our predecessors have made it their aim to favor and increase its spread by their high recommendations. Thus Urban IV. testified that "every day the Rosary obtained fresh benefits for Christianity." Sixtus IV. declared that this method of prayer "redounded to the honor of God and the Blessed Virgin, and was well suited to obviate impending dangers"; Leo X. that "it was instituted to oppose pernicious heresiarchs and heresies"; while Julius III. called it "the glory of the Church." So also St. Pius V., that "with the spread of this devotion the meditations of the faithful have begun to be more inflamed, their prayers more fervent, and they have suddenly become different men; the darkness of heresy has been dissipated, and the light of Catholic faith has broke forth again." Lastly, Gregory XIII. in his turn pronounced that

"the Rosary had been instituted by St. Dominic to appease the anger of God and to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Moved by these thoughts and by the examples of our predecessors, we have deemed it most opportune, for similar reasons, to institute solemn prayers and to endeavor, by adopting those addressed to the Blessed Virgin in the recital of the Rosary, to obtain from Her Son, Jesus Christ, a similar aid against present dangers. You have before your eyes, venerable brethren, the trials to which the Church is daily exposed; Christian piety, public morality, nay, even faith itself, the supreme good and beginning of all the other virtues, are daily menaced with the greatest perils.

Nor are you only spectators of the difficulty of the situation, but your charity, like ours, is keenly wounded; for it is one of the most painful and grievous sights to see so many souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, snatched from salvation by the whirlwind of an age of error, precipitated into the abyss of eternal death. Our need of divine help is as great to-day as when the great Dominic introduced the use of the Rosary of Mary as a balm for the wounds of his contemporaries.

That great saint indeed, divinely enlightened, perceived that no remedy would be more adapted to the evils of his time than that men should return to Christ, who "is the Way, the Truth, and the Life," by frequent meditation on the salvation obtained for us by Him, and

should seek the intercession with God of that Virgin to whom it is given to destroy all heresies. He, therefore, so composed the Rosary as to recall the mysteries of our salvation in succession, and the subject of meditation is mingled and, as it were, interlaced with the angelic salutation and with the prayer addressed to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We who seek a remedy for similar evils do not doubt, therefore, that the prayer introduced by that most blessed man with so much advantage to the Catholic world will have the greatest effect in removing the calamities of our times also. Not only do we earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly or privately in their own house and family, and that unceasingly, but we also desire that the whole month of October in this year should be consecrated to the Holy Queen of the Rosary. We decree and order that in the whole Catholic world during this year the devotion of the Rosary shall be solemnly celebrated by special and splendid services. From the first day of October, therefore, until the second day of the November following, in every parish, and, if the ecclesiastical authority deem it opportune and of use, in every chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, let five decades of the Rosary be recited with the addition of the Litany of Loretto. We desire that the people should frequent these pious exercises; and we will that either Mass shall be said at the altar, or that the Blessed Sacrament shall be exposed to

the adoration of the faithful, Benediction being afterwards given with the Sacred Host to the pious congregation. We highly approve of the confraternities of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin going in procession, following ancient custom, through the town as a public demonstration of their devotion. And in those places where this is not possible let it be replaced by more assiduous visits to the churches, and let the fervor of piety display itself by a still greater diligence in the exercise of the Christian virtues.

In favor of those who shall do as we have above laid down we are pleased to open the heavenly treasure-house of the Church, that they may find therein at once encouragements and reward for their piety. We therefore grant to all those who, in the prescribed space of time, shall have taken part in the public recital of the Rosary and the litanies, and shall have prayed for our intention, seven years and seven times forty days of indulgence, obtainable each time. We will that those also shall share in these favors who are hindered by a lawful cause from joining in these public prayers of which we have spoken, provided that they shall have practised those devotions in private, and shall have prayed to God for our intention. We remit all punishment and penalties for sins committed, in the form of a pontifical indulgence, to all who, in the prescribed time, either publicly in the churches or privately at home (when hindered from the former by lawful cause), shall have at least twice

practised these pious exercises; and who shall have, after due confession, approached the holy table. We further grant a plenary indulgence to those who, either on the feast of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin or within its octave, after having similarly purified their souls by a salutary confession, shall have approached the table of Christ and prayed in some church, according to our intention, to God and the Blessed Virgin for the necessities of the Church.

And you, venerable brethren—the more you have at heart the honor of Mary and the welfare of human society, the more diligently apply yourselves to nourish the piety of the people towards the great Virgin, and to increase their confidence in Her. We believe it to be part of the designs of Providence that, in these times of trial for the Church, the ancient devotion to the august Virgin should live and flourish amid the greatest part of the Christian world. May now the Christian nations, excited by our exhortations and inflamed by your appeals, seek the protection of Mary with an ardor growing greater day by day; let them cling more and more to the practice of the Rosary, to that devotion which our ancestors were in the habit of practising, not only as an ever-ready remedy for their misfortunes, but as a badge of Christian piety. The heavenly Patroness of the human race will receive with joy these prayers and supplications, and will easily obtain that the good shall grow in virtue, and that the erring shall return to salvation and repent; and that God, who is the avenger of

crime, moved to mercy and pity, may deliver Christendom and civil society from all dangers, and restore to them peace, so much desired.

Encouraged by this hope, we beseech God Himself, with the most earnest desire of our heart, through Her in whom He has placed the fulness of all good, to grant you, venerable brethren, every heavenly blessing. As an augury and pledge of which we lovingly impart to you, to your clergy, and to the people entrusted to your care the Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, the 1st of September, 1883, in the sixth year of our pontificate. LEO PP., XIII.

[Just as our little book of Meditations is going through the press the following document comes most opportunely from the SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES, by order of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. It reiterates the directions contained in the decree above given in relation to the celebration of the Rosary devotions during the month of October, and seems to make that month perpetually sacred to OUR LADY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

The translation here given is that of the Rev. T. F. Mahar in the Cleveland *Catholic Universe.*]

DECREE REGARDING THE ROSARY.

The Sacred Congregation of Rites, by order of the Holy Father, continuing the public order for the recitation of the Holy Rosary during the coming month of October, this year; and, without farther orders, for following years.

AMONG the many acts of apostolic vigilance by which our Most Holy Lord Pope Leo XIII.

from his entrance into the Supreme Pontificate has earnestly aimed to provide, with the help of God, for the restoration of desired tranquillity to the Church and the whole of society, the prominence is clearly seen in the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus* of September 1, 1883, regarding the celebration of the Most Sacred Rosary of Mary, the glorious Mother of God, during the whole month of October of that year. The devotion of the Rosary was surely instituted by a special providence of God for the main purpose of imploring the potent and prompt aid of the Queen of Heaven against the enemies of Christianity, protecting the integrity of Faith in the flock of Christ, and snatching from the way of eternal perdition souls redeemed at the price of the Divine Blood. The most pleasing fruits of Christian piety and of confidence in the celestial patronage of the Virgin Mary that were during that month gathered from that salutary work in every part of the Catholic world, and also still pressing misfortunes, led to the issuance, October 30 of the following year, 1884, of the apostolic letters *Superiore anno* with the same exhortations and commands for the dedication of the then approaching month of October to the honor of Our Lady of the Rosary by a similar solemn rite and fervent piety; for the reason that the principal fruit of a good work and pledge of coming victory is perseverance in what is undertaken. Pursuing this course, our Most Holy Lord, since on the one hand many evils are still afflicting us on every side, and on the

other hand there still abides and flourishes in Christians that faith which works through charity, and that almost measureless confidence with veneration in the loving Mother of God, wishes we should now all the more studiously and eagerly persevere with one mind in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus. For the certain hope rises within him that She who alone has destroyed all heresies in the whole world shall, with the addition on our part of fruits worthy of penance, cause the punishing wrath of divine justice to unbend, and shall bring to us safety and peace.

Wherefore whatever His Holiness decreed the last two years as to the month during which the solemnities of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary are celebrated, he commands and decrees this year likewise, and the years to follow as long as this most afflicting condition of the Church and of states endures, and it is not given to the Church to give thanks to God for the restoration of full liberty to the Supreme Pontiff. He decrees, therefore, and commands that every year, from the first day of October to the second of the following November, in all parochial churches of the Catholic world, and in all public oratories dedicated to the Mother of God, or even others to be chosen by the Ordinary, at least five decades of the Rosary of Mary with the Litany of Loretto be recited daily; and if it be in the morning, that Mass be celebrated during the prayers; if in the afternoon, the Blessed Sacrament be exposed for adoration, and Benediction duly given. He de-

sires, also, that, where civil laws allow it, the Sodalities of the Most Sacred Rosary conduct public display of religion.

Renewing every indulgence formerly granted, he bestows an Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days for each time to those who, in the appointed days, shall assist at the public recitation of the Rosary and shall pray according to the intention of His Holiness, and the same to those who shall with legitimate hindrance perform the above privately. To those who shall in the aforesaid time perform the above ten times in the churches, or with legitimate hindrance privately, and shall make sacramental confession and communion, he grants from the treasure of the Church a Plenary Indulgence. This plenary indulgence he likewise bestows on all those who, whether on the feast itself of the Rosary or any of the eight days following, shall receive the sacraments as above and shall pray in any sacred edifice to God and His Most Holy Mother according to the intention of His Holiness.

Providing also for those of the faithful who live in the country and are occupied in October, especially in work on the land, His Holiness grants that all of what is laid down above, together with the sacred Indulgences, may be deferred to the following months of November or December, according to the prudent judgment of the Ordinary.

On each and every one of these things our Most Holy Lord has commanded the present decree to be issued through the Sacred Congre-

gation of Rites and transmitted for faithful execution to all Ordinaries of places.

August 20, 1885.

D. Cardinal Bartolini,
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Lawrence Salviati,
Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

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